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ABSTRACT

Suggestions for effective parenting of preschool children are provided in 33 brief articles on children's feelings concerning self-esteem; fear; adopted children; the birth of a sibling; death; depression; and coping with stress, trauma, and divorce. Children's behavior is discussed in articles on toddlers' eating habits, punishment and preschoolers, whining, making friends, bedtime, good manners, interpersonal conflict, and friendship. Articles on children's learning focus on preparation for preschool, what preschoolers should be learning, first days of preschool, exercising choice, and questions about sex. Parenting is discussed in articles on assessing preschoolers' development, nudity at home, traveling with a preschooler, monitoring television viewing, parental disagreements about child rearing, the only child, chores, sex differences, stress, and children's wish to sleep in their parents' bed. Also included are ERIC digests on involving parents in the education of their children, the escalating kindergarten curriculum, praise in the classroom, the nature of children's play, creativity in young children, infant day care, and language development. Resource lists cite ERIC documents and journal articles on employer-supported child care, at-risk children, and school success. A reprint of a computer search of the ERIC database on family living is included. (RH)

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family living

Suggestions for Effective Parenting

Lilian G. Katz
and others

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Your Child's Self-esteem

Lilian G. Katz

The idea that children should feel good about themselves is, remarkably, a relatively modern one. Only one or two generations ago, praise was withheld from children for fear that youngsters might become conceited or "swell-headed." These days, however, it often seems that we err to the other extreme, and many children are in danger of becoming too self-conscious and eager for praise.

It's not so difficult to understand how praising a child's efforts can positively affect his self-esteem, and parents may need little guidance in this regard. But parents may be less clear about how they can affect a child's feelings about himself in other ways. With an eye toward helping parents with this dilemma, I've outlined some ideas below that you may want to consider as you think about developing a healthy sense of self-esteem in your children.

An individual's self-esteem is the result of evaluations by one's self and by others. For young children, the greatest influences on self-esteem—high or low—are others' evaluations, especially those of people closest to the child. The basis for self-esteem in childhood is the feeling of being loved and accepted, particularly by someone the child can look up to. This is one reason that parental support means so much to children and has such an extraordinary effect on their self-esteem.

The basis for self-esteem in childhood is the feeling of being loved and accepted.

Remember that it is not desirable to have excessive self-esteem. Indeed, an excessively high degree of self-esteem, confidence, or assurance might cause a person to be insensitive to others' reactions and feelings about him. Though it is difficult to know precisely where the level is, the optimum level of self-esteem seems to be that which allows for the normal fluctuations in feelings of confidence, pride, and competence. The complexities of life insure that all children (and adults) encounter situations in which it is realistic to have little confidence, hurt pride, or insufficient competence. Children can be helped by adults to accept the fact that such difficult situations are inevitable. They are also temporary, and in the scheme of things, they are only a small portion of the range of experiences they'll have in life.

Self-esteem varies from one interpersonal situation to another. Children do not have to be accepted or loved by everyone they encounter. Parents can help a child cope

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with occasions of rejection or indifference by reassuring her that Mom's and Dad's own acceptance of the youngster has not been shaken.

Self-esteem is not acquired all at once early in life to last forever and be present in all situations. A child may feel confident and accepted at home but the opposite in the neighborhood or preschool. Adults can generally avoid those situations in which their self-esteem is likely to take a beating, but children are limited to situations adults provide for them. They have few skills or resources for avoiding situations in which their self-assurance will be threatened. Parents should be aware that in some instances inappropriate behavior on the part of their child may be a signal that the child perceives the particular circumstance as threatening to his self-confidence.

Self-esteem is measured against certain criteria, typically acquired with the family. The criteria against which we are evaluated vary among families, ethnic groups, and neighborhoods. They also vary for boys and girls—more so in some communities than in others. In some families or groups esteem is based on physical beauty, in others on intelligence, athleticism, or toughness. Your child will need help in meeting your standards on those criteria. Whatever criteria for being an acceptable person make sense in your family, support your child's effort to meet them, but reassure her that, no matter what, she is loved and always belongs to the family.

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When Angels Fear to Tread

Lilian G. Katz

Even newborns show the capacity to feel fear; they typically react strongly to loud noises or sudden changes in height. These early responses gradually develop into more mature fearfulness that appears during the first year as fear of strangers. Many children develop other fears during the early years, most of which pass without scars as their understanding of the world and their skill in coping with it develops. As we strive to develop children's self-assurance, it is helpful to keep in mind that some fears are quite reasonable, some are clearly irrational, and most fears probably lie somewhere in between.

All within reason

If you are very small, it makes good sense to be fearful of large dogs, dark places, and strange noises. Even a place the child knows well loses familiar reassuring cues in the dark. It is reasonable for a child without experience with old or handicapped people to recoil fearfully from them at first. It is not unreasonable for a young child to be fearful of doctors and nurses whose treatments are often intrusive, unpleasant, and even painful.

Reassure the child that you will always be at his side to take care of his needs.

In such cases of reasonable fears, the emphasis should be on helping children cope with them. For example, a child can be taught to stand still and let a strange dog become acquainted with her, rather than to run from it. In anticipation of a visit to the doctor, a parent can remind the child of the last occasion when the discomfort was very brief and soon forgotten, as it will be this time, too. Offering a bribe or denying the unpleasantness does not help develop the courage that comes from facing up to reality.

Some children develop fears of illness or handicaps. In such cases, since you cannot guarantee that these difficulties will never occur, it is useful to reassure the child that, though these problems are unlikely to occur, you would always be at his side and would take care of his needs.

Fear of loss

Occasionally, under the pressures of time and daily hassles, a parent threatens to leave the supermarket without her slow-moving child if she doesn't hurry up. Most children recognize this as an empty threat;

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but for some, there is always a certain amount of residual doubt, and some fear of separation, loss, or abandonment may develop. It is likely that children who openly express these fears are less troubled by them than children who keep these fears to themselves. Again, the best response to such fears is to acknowledge and accept them—without implying that you agree with the child's views—and to offer a degree of reassurance.

"You're being unreasonable"

In the case of fears that have no basis in reality, fears of invisible monsters, ghosts, or evil visitors from outer space, the emphasis should be on dispelling them. To make fun or to ridicule these fears, or simply dismiss them as silly, is unlikely to help a child develop confidence in his own capacity to cope with life's uncertainties. Sometimes the fears develop from excessive television watching that can be monitored and reduced. Even some bedtime stories set imaginative children off to bad dreams occasionally. Sometimes these fears are prompted by a child's wish to establish that his parents are strong enough to protect him from unforeseen dangers. In such cases, the best response is to reassure the child that even if there were such things as monsters—indicating that you are sure there really aren't—you would know what to do and be able to protect him.

A bid for attention

Sometimes children use these fears as a pretext for gaining attention and comfort they believe (rightly or wrongly) they cannot get in other ways. In such cases, spending more time in close and comfortable activities, especially before bedtime, is more helpful than rational explanations of the unlikelihood of visits from space monsters. A parent's confident approach to these matters is one of the best ways to strengthen a child's own confidence.

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Coping with Stress

Lilian G. Katz

The traditional view of childhood as a time of lighthearted bliss has given way to recent recognition that children are susceptible to a variety of stresses. Although the term "stress" is difficult to define, most of us "know it when we see it": It's the feeling of being overwhelmed or threatened by more pressures and demands than we can handle.

One child's fun is another's strain. What constitutes a source of stress varies among children. Some find the first day of preschool stressful, while others cope with it easily. The excitement of a birthday party may overwhelm some children. Perhaps it's the number of new faces or the level of activity or noise that requires too rapid an adjustment. One child may be stressed by changes in his daily routine, moving to a new home, or the birth of a sibling. These same events may strike another youngster as novel and enjoyable, and, indeed, he may thrive on such stimulating fare.

Children cope better when they have a high sense of self-esteem, and good verbal and problem-solving skills.

Trouble signals

The signs of stress are not as difficult to define as the term itself. In the case of preschoolers, excessive stress may result in frequent illness, poor sleep patterns, persistent fussiness about food, excessive or diminished appetite, regression to earlier behavior patterns, poor concentration, heightened irritability, increased whining and crying, frequent day-dreaming, restlessness, excessive thumb-sucking, and frequent nightmares. Children suffering from stress may be antisocial and unresponsive to the friendly overtures of others.

Feelings of stress are rarely free-floating; they are usually reactions to particular events or circumstances. In cases when stressors persist — such as when a child is subjected to constant nagging, disapproval, or criticism; frequent family arguments; a tense household; or excessive demands for performance and success — the feelings of stress can become chronic.

Bouncing back

Children differ in their resilience and in how long it takes them to bounce back after stressful life events. Some studies indicate that boys are more susceptible to stress reactions than girls. The reasons for this are not clear; they may be due to cultural norms that put more pressure on

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young boys than on girls to be brave and strong and not to cry or otherwise reveal their distress.

Coping strategies

Coping usually requires thinking through the alternatives at hand and trying to make the best of stressful circumstances. However, a preschooler's capacity to analyze and formulate strategic plans is very limited. Getting help is therefore highly dependent upon an adult recognizing warning signs in youngsters struggling with stress. Once the problem is identified, the adult can help by listening to the child's expressions concerning stressful events and situations and offering understanding, support, reassurance, and plentiful affection, holding, and cuddling.

A most important step adults must take to reduce stress on children is to attack the source itself. For example, if stress is a reaction to going to a preschool or daycare center, it can help to let the caregiver know your concern, to ask her to watch out for what might be causing the youngster to feel stress, and to offer the child frequent reassurance. Young children need the kind of protection from excessive stress that only vigilant adults can provide for them.

Children seem to cope better with stress when they have a high sense of self-esteem, which parents can and should encourage, and when they are equipped with good verbal and problem-solving skills.

Finally, children also learn coping strategies by observing others around them. When adults exhibit calmness in the face of emergencies or other difficulties, children learn from this example and are less likely to pick up fears and more likely to be able to cope with their own moments of difficulty.

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Coping with Trauma

Lilian G. Katz

Although we always hope that the course of family life and growing up will run smoothly, almost every child will be disrupted by what we call a "traumatic" event before reaching maturity.

Short-term events, lasting effects

By definition a trauma is a sudden, unexpected, dramatic, forceful, or violent event. It very often involves some kind of bodily harm as well as fright. Child psychiatrists have been concerned about the lasting effects of traumatic experiences. Even though these experiences may be of short duration, they can lead to phobias or other kinds of lasting psychic effects.

It would not be surprising for a child involved in a violent auto crash or a tornado to develop strong and lasting fears of autos and highways or thunderstorms and noisy whistling winds. In the same way, a child who is very suddenly approached by a large, fierce dog could be traumatized by the experience, even though most adults think children should take such moments in their stride. Certainly not all will react strongly to such experiences. Most children in alarming situations look toward the nearest familiar adult and take on the same emotional reaction they perceive in him or her.

Virtually every child's life will be disrupted by a traumatic event before the child reaches maturity.

Preparing for the unpredictable

Because these kinds of experiences are sudden and unpredictable there is no way gradually to prepare the child in advance. We are always faced with the problem of how to minimize the potentially harmful effects afterwards.

It is generally helpful following dramatic events for the adults to stay as quiet and calm as possible, even faking it if necessary. There's plenty of time to collapse later after the child has been calmed! The emotionality of adults appears to be quite contagious among even very young children; thus adults can often be most helpful by deliberately absorbing a child's tension—somewhat like a sponge—by listening, holding, rocking, caressing, and quietly reassuring the child. If the adult in the situation reacts with the same level of tension and emotionality as the child, the levels will escalate as each one feels more tense when she senses the other's tension. A traumatic moment can be stretched out to an unnecessarily long ordeal.

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Occasionally adults try to help by denying that anything really unusual happened or by avoiding the subject completely. Certainly some judgment must be exercised as to whether to bring up the matter of the traumatic experience. But it seems wiser, generally, to be open in acknowledging not only the event itself but the strong and painful feelings it engendered. The child can then be reassured that it is all right to be upset, and can be encouraged to talk about why she's upset whenever she wants to. If the youngster resists bringing up the subject, then it is probably best to wait a few days and try again. In cases of strong reluctance to talk about the event, it is helpful to say something to the child like, "It's okay if you don't want to talk about it just now, but when you do, I'll be here." The idea is to give the child a strategy for letting you know when she is ready and by which she can act on her own impulse to explore her feelings. Many children require this sense of initiative while they are working out their feelings and getting ready to deal with them. Many children react to even a little pressure to face the subject by digging their heels in deeper and deeper, and so the painful feelings may never be adequately explored.

Overcoming the event

Opportunities for spontaneous play with other children, in which they act out the traumatic events, are probably the easiest and most effective way to help children overcome the effects of these events. Young children have been reported to play "hurricane," "cyclone," and many terrible war scenes, apparently with beneficial effects in dealing with life's unavoidable frightening moments.

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Adopted Children

Lilian G. Katz

Most parents find responding to young children's questions about where they came from a bit tricky. It is not surprising that adoptive parents have particular worries about how best to answer them, but the sooner the children are told, the better. It would be less than helpful for a child to learn of his or her adoptive status from other children.

Questions and answers

The meanings young children give to the facts of adoption may be a bit confused in the beginning. It is all right to indicate that it will get clearer later on. Threes and fours are unlikely to be concerned about the reasons their biological parents did not keep them and are not as likely as older children to ask for information about them. But questions will come up in the light of new experiences and increasing understanding. Like many other subjects, adoption is not one about which your child will gain a complete understanding in one brief chat; the topic will surely come up frequently throughout your youngster's years of growth and development.

The sooner children are told about adoption, the better.

Most specialists agree that straightforward, simple, and honest answers in response to the child's direct questions are the most appropriate. As with many of the other facts of life young children learn, it is best to deal with questions as they arise, to answer only what has been asked, and to try not to explain everything all at once. Otherwise you'll succeed only in confusing the child.

The "chosen child" approach

Some parents have reacted to children's questions about adoption by emphasizing that they have been specially "chosen" by their adoptive parents. There are at least two problems with this chosen-child approach. One is that if the matter of choice and selection is emphasized too strongly, it may cause an overreaction by implying deep down that there is something tragic about the condition of being an adoptee and that being with one's natural parent is really best. There is no reason either to suggest or to accept these implications.

The other problem is what this approach says about children in the adoptee's family who were born into it. Are their parents supposed to feel "stuck" with what they got? All children, those adopted and those who came naturally, need to be reassured that they are wanted children. And that is

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where the emphasis should be—on being wanted rather than specially selected or chosen.

Discussing the natural mother

If a child asks why she is not living with her natural mother, it is a good idea to give a simple and frank answer without casting any undesirable shadows on her natural mother's character or motives. The fact is most children stay with their biological mothers, but others are adopted, raised, and loved by other women. If you don't know why the mother did not keep the child, you can speculate on what some of the possible reasons might be, but be sure to reflect a sympathetic view of the possibilities. Refer to the child's biological mother as precisely that, or alternatively as her natural mother, without hesitation.

Coping with teasing by other children

Sometimes adopted children are teased by others who may know little about the kind of care and affection adoptive parents provide. It may help them to know that many other kinds of children are called names for many reasons. It is important to help adoptive children to know how to respond to such teasing and to learn to indicate that they are just as much wanted by their adoptive parents as the teasers are wanted by their natural ones.

Parent-child conflicts—common to all families

Sometimes parents feel especially insecure when their adopted children get angry with them. But they are not alone! All children get angry and even hate their parents sometimes, and it is well known that many children periodically wish they had other parents or would be adopted by the parents of a friend, who seem—at least from a distance—to be better parents than their own.

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Coping With Separation Anxiety

Lilian G. Katz

A preschooler's unwillingness to leave a parent or other beloved adult is a good sign that important attachments have developed. Many experts believe this capacity is a prerequisite for a healthy personality and a satisfying adulthood. Knowing this, however, is small comfort when your youngster is experiencing great difficulty with separation.

It's not unusual

Separation anxiety and distress, and their consequences, have been studied extensively. Indications are that most young children experience some distress on separation from a loved one, or anxiety when they fear that a familiar person might be out of reach. Moreover, separation anxiety and distress are likely to intensify in a new environment, especially if the child has no experience from which to predict what will happen to him in it.

Help a child become familiar with new surroundings and people.

Research suggests that, in the case of toddlers, those who have had either very few or very frequent separations from familiar caretakers suffer the greatest separation distress, suggesting that for each child there is an optimum frequency of separations below or above which distress becomes severe. It might be helpful to keep in mind that adults also experience distress when separated from "significant others," although its effects on them are not usually overwhelming, as they are for many children.

Strategies

The following points may be useful in helping you and your youngster cope with the inevitable occasions when you must be apart:

Separation distress can be minimized by helping a child to become familiar with new surroundings and people before actually being left in and with them.

Express your understanding and appreciation of how it feels to have to part from a loved one. It is inappropriate to scold, criticize, mock, tease, or threaten a child over separation distress. Expressions of understanding and acceptance, without excessive sympathy, can be reassuring.

Resist the temptation to bribe a child for controlling or hiding her distress. Planning a special event to look forward to at reunion can alleviate some feeling of pain,

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but the plans should not be conditional on good behavior.

Some children show especially intense distress during family-life disruptions or other times of unusual stress. Extra comfort will help to alleviate these temporary bouts of anxiety.

When guilt creeps in

Occasionally a child may sense a parent's ambivalent feelings regarding the separation. If you feel guilty about leaving your child, she may pick up signals of your own conflict or anxiety and aim her behavior at controlling the situation instead of coping with it. If your guilt is due to uncertainty about the arrangements you have made for your child, either change them or accept them as what you and your child must cope with. As a general principle, keep in mind that it does not advance a child's development for her to be able to manipulate adults.

Signs of trouble

If a child remains inconsolable in a new setting or with a new caretaker for more than roughly fifteen days, special help or changes in plans are called for. Much depends on how quickly the child builds attachments with new caretakers and friends; and adults vary in their skills at helping children build attachments to them. But if within about two weeks new bonds have not been formed, it may be necessary to make other arrangements that will be more comfortable for your child.

If a child never shows anxiety of any kind at separation from parents, other aspects of her behavior should be observed to make sure that secure attachments have been formed. However, if her general mood over several days is good, if she regularly sleeps and eats well, if she seems to enjoy experiences with other children, and if there has been no significant change in her behavior, it is most likely that all is going well for her.

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Preparing for Another Blessed Event

Lilian G. Katz

The fourth year of life seems to be a good time to welcome a new sibling. By this age most youngsters have real potential for understanding the needs of others and can be helped to anticipate and make allowances for the inevitable disruptions a new member of the family causes.

Also, most four-year-olds have achieved just enough self-sufficiency to be able to get along without constant attention themselves. Typically, they are becoming interested in activities and friendships they can enjoy away from home. However, for all their sophistication, most of them need help and understanding to adjust to an event as dramatic as the arrival of a new baby.

Be realistic

Occasionally a preschooler's eager anticipation of a new sibling gets out of hand and will surely lead to disappointment. So it is a good idea to help her gain a realistic idea of some of the disruptive aspects of a new baby in the household. Be careful not to exaggerate how much fun the new little person is going to be. Straight talk about some of the inevitable nuisance aspects of newborns should be included in your occasional talks about what is ahead.

Arrange opportunities to visit relatives and friends and observe a few babies closely.

Questions and answers

The news of the big event is often announced too early for a preschooler. Wait until he asks questions about the preparations and the obvious physical changes he observes in his mother. As questions are raised, they should be responded to with plain and simple explanations of the facts. Some youngsters enjoy feeling the baby move or listening to its heart beat; others do not. Be guided by your own child's willingness to get into the subject. As interest increases, you and your child can discuss casually some of the possible ways he can participate in the care of the baby. Leave the plans loose, and indicate that he does not have to commit himself in advance; he can wait and see how he feels about it after the baby has settled in.

If your preschooler has had little exposure to very small babies, it might be helpful to arrange opportunities to visit relatives and friends and observe a few babies closely.

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Many hospitals now give special tours of the baby nursery for expectant siblings. This exposure could reduce some of the unrealistic expectations of the behavior of newborns and the potential disappointment that often comes from a lack of familiarity with babies.

A special concern

One of the concerns likely to be on your preschooler's mind is provision for her care while you are in the hospital and immediately after your return. Unless she raises the issue early, it is not necessary to announce the plans months ahead of time. Discussion about the arrangements should be straightforward and confident. It will not hurt to let her know that she will probably miss you, and it would be quite understandable if she felt a bit strange and concerned about it. Let her know also that you will certainly be thinking of her.

When baby comes home

Once the baby has joined the household, give your preschooler opportunities to let you know how he feels about the new situation. Let him know that he does not have to admire the baby right away. Let him know also that all the things you are doing to take care of the new one you once did for him when he needed them in his first few days of life.

Many parents provide gifts for the preschooler to soften the drama of the attention families typically give to the newborn. Like all good ideas, this can also be overdone. While it is a good idea to be sensitive to the preschooler's feelings, it is not advisable to indulge them; you might inadvertently reinforce her belief that she is entitled to feel sorry for herself being saddled with a new sibling. The main idea to convey is that the event is natural and normal, and though it can be very annoying, it is part of the life cycle we observe in most of nature around us.

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Discussing Death With Preschoolers

Lilian G. Katz

Even though we have come a long way from treating death as a taboo subject, many parents still feel uncomfortable when children raise questions about death. Inevitably, the subject evokes premonitions as well as memories of grief, and fear. However, when we examine and come to accept our own feelings and attitudes, it may be easier to help our children come to terms with this difficult fact of life.

How to begin

It is probably best if the young child's first introduction to the concept of death and the procedures involved in burial and so forth are first discussed concerning someone who has not been close to him.

It is also probably best to let children lead into the subject themselves. The majority of young children will express some curiosity about death, perhaps provoked by seeing insects or animals killed. Some children even experiment with killing small insects. (On such occasions, scolding is not appropriate; rather, provide informal discussion and matter-of-fact answers.)

Let children lead into the subject of death themselves.

The ability to grasp the concept of death as an irreversible end to life is related in part to the young child's understanding of time. For most children under age five, death seems to be a reversible process. Many children in this age group still equate death with the cycle of sleeping and waking and the separation that goes with a long journey and ultimate reunion.

Research of recent years indicates that adults go through predictable stages of grief. However, it is not clear that preschoolers do. The length and depth of their grieving will depend very much on how close the child felt to the departed person. As with sorrow arising from other temporary situations, it is not only all right to cry, it is important to do so.

If you want your child to understand death in religious terms, then religious concepts and sentiments should be developed early. Preschoolers, though, are probably too young to be prepared in advance for someone's imminent death.

Hidden anxieties

In some cases a child may feel a vague sense of guilt for having recently or frequently displeased the deceased or for having unkind thoughts about that person.

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The child may then see the departure as abandonment or punishment. Other young children react to the death of someone they have known directly with fear that their own parents will die and abandon them in the same way. Because very often such confusions occur at a time when parents themselves may be grieving, they may not immediately be aware of their child's need for reassurance.

If the child's fears are dismissed by saying that death happens mainly to very old people, an aversion to, or even fear of, being around the aged may inadvertently be engendered. Similarly, if you indicate that death is a consequence of being very ill, some children may develop excessive anxiety about their own illnesses. It is probably best to indicate that, in general, death comes to people who have lived a very long time, and in many cases they are ready to rest and leave. The important thing is to enjoy each day that you are together.

There are many views as to whether young children should be allowed to attend funeral services. The balance seems to favor giving children an opportunity to mark the finality and reality of the occasion with ceremony and ritual.

Delayed mourning

For some children, grief may be too great to express. In some cases of acute grief, a child may appear oblivious to the loss. (It is useful to remember that grief can only accompany felt loss and that children do not always feel loss just because a departed person was a family member.)

If you are reasonably sure that the child had strong ties to the deceased, and this apparent indifference persists, the child may need help to express delayed grief. She should not be chastised in any way for her apparent lack of feeling. Rather, some kind of grief counseling may be helpful. Some experts say that children have a "short sadness span," so you shouldn't expect a long period of grief in most cases.

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Helping Children Cope with Divorce

Lilian G. Katz

By the time a couple breaks a relationship permanently, all involved have already experienced a good deal of anguish. In fact, if the period leading to the breaking point has been a long, agonizing one, the departure of one of the partners may actually bring some momentary relief for everybody. Whatever the case may be, it is almost certain that children in the household have missed some attention during this period, and their need for reassurance and stability may be acute.

Problems youngsters encounter

For young children, a family breakup presents three related kinds of problems that they may need help with. Most obvious is the stress induced by being in the midst of discord; second, the pain of separation and loss of a parent; and finally, confusion about the causes of these dramatic changes in family life.

Reassure the child that things will get better and settle down.

During the most intense parental discord, preschoolers often exhibit symptoms of stress. In some children, the effect of stress is manifested by regression to less mature behavior. For instance, one study of preschoolers whose parents were going through divorce found that the children exhibited behavior that included loss of toilet training, episodes of separation anxiety, masturbation, and the use of transitional objects, such as security blankets and dolls, for reassurance. In other children, stress is shown in increased irritability, aggression, sadness, fearfulness, distractibility, or sleep disturbances. Some children whine more than usual; others become more resistant to parental authority.

Longitudinal studies indicate that whatever the symptoms, they usually subside by the end of the second year of separation. The stress symptoms usually pass if a parent can respond to them with understanding and patience. Reassure the child in simple terms that things will get better and settle down, and that even though everyone is upset at the moment, you still belong to each other and always will. It is a time when family members and support groups in churches and in mental-health and family-service agencies can contribute a great deal to alleviate some of the deepest distress. Most children are helped also if other relationships that matter to them can be maintained. The availability of loved grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins should continue as much as possible. It might be beneficial for you to schedule more visits or extended visits with favorite relatives.

Allay fears with explanations

Even though there is persuasive evidence that children are at greater risk from family discord than from parental absence, separation is never easy. Some young children interpret the separation to mean that the missing parent has stopped loving them. Some youngsters also believe that they did something terrible, and that this caused a parent to leave the household.

Many experts have suggested that children benefit from having simple explanations for the departure of a parent. It is a good idea to help a child give the separation an appropriate meaning: it occurs because two adults will feel more comfortable living apart, but they will continue to love their children just the same. Some sensitive and imaginative children may feel guilty about the sense of relief that often accompanies final separation following a period of tension and discord. With preschoolers, it is probably best to answer each question simply and straightforwardly as it arises.

Minimizing stress

Much of the stress caused by separation can be minimized if the parents strive to maintain a cordial and respectful relationship, and especially if they avoid recrimination and hostility in front of their children. Though it may be especially difficult to do so in the midst of emotional upheaval, when parents speak respectfully of each other even though they have found that they can no longer enjoy sharing the household, children are greatly aided.

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More Than Just the Blues

Lilian G. Katz

The idea that life is mostly joyful and trouble-free for preschoolers has recently been modified by deepening awareness that even very small children sometimes feel despair. Until quite a few years ago specialists assumed that young children could not experience genuine depressive feelings. Since preschoolers cannot describe their emotions precisely or clearly, their occasional tearfulness and listlessness were generally attributed to the normal ups and downs of growing up.

Failure to thrive

In the 1940s some very young children in residential care were identified as depressed when they failed to thrive even though their physical needs were met. The children were weepy, withdrawn, apathetic; they lost weight and failed to progress mentally. These children had minimal contact with their caretakers and virtually no other sources of stimulation. Other studies of young children who were separated from a loved adult during World War II suggested that their reactions went from protest to despair and ultimately to detachment, which we generally call depression.

Adults' moods and emotions can have a powerful effect on young children.

Causes

Even though specialists now agree that preschoolers can experience depression, they don't yet concur on all its causes and symptoms. Shifts in mood, including occasional feelings of hopelessness, occur in most humans at all ages. A young child's separation from a loved adult should be accompanied by some protest, but it normally subsides within a short period. However, a child who, more often than not, is weepy and withdrawn, or excessively clingy or dependent may be signaling that life is getting him down and help is needed.

While the loss of or separation from a loved one seems to be a contributing factor in childhood depression, recent research has also pointed to the powerful effects that adults' emotions and moods can have on young children, even when the children are not directly involved in the events that give rise to them.

Studies indicate that young children's own feelings are affected by both positive and negative emotions that are expressed between adults in their presence. Background anger that is not even directed at them—maybe at a sibling—can produce enough stress in young children to hamper their development. It is as though the kinds of negative emotions characteristic of marital discord, for example, distract young children in such a way that they cannot attend to appropriate developmental opportunities in their own environment. Most adults can recall the kind of emotionally distracting effects adults' quarrels had on their own feelings when they were children.

Identification and treatment

As with most problems in development, early identification and intervention are essential. Occasional exposure to adults' anger and the resolution of anger helps children learn how to handle their own feelings and how people make up again. Some children can cope with more such exposures than others. Whether a child is suffering unduly from the background emotions in the environment can be assessed by observing his responses to it. If he continues to thrive and participate in the normal activities around him, he is probably coping very well.

Persistent depressive feelings that characterize true depression appear to be very rare in young children. However, if a preschooler remains withdrawn, weepy, sad, restless, or irritable for as long as a month at a stretch, then it is best to consult a specialist. On the other hand, occasional bouts of sadness and unhappiness suggest that it might be wise to look at the child's present lifestyle and try to determine how stresses, separation, and the kinds of background feelings she is exposed to might be changed. More loving support and understanding is always recommended on these occasions.

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Toddlers' Eating Habits

Lilian G. Katz

By the preschool period, many youngsters have acquired patterns of behavior with food that cause problems for parents and others who are responsible for their care. The recent emphasis on good nutrition and its importance to health seems to have increased the level of parental concern and the tension that goes with it.

Because eating habits are developed early and seem very resistant to change, it is a good idea to think through how to get children off to the best possible start.

Provide nutritious choices

Some specialists believe that if children as young as three or four are encouraged to select what they want to eat by themselves, they will ultimately and intuitively come up with a balanced diet. This can only be the case if all the foods from which they make their choices are nutritious. If among the choices are some appealing foods that have little nutritious value, there is no guarantee that young children will make the selections that are best for their health. Consumption of so-called junk food should be reserved for special occasions.

Insisting that the child eat all the food on his plate can set an unpleasant mealtime behavior pattern

Avoid nagging, fussing, and force

Parents often respond to a child's indifference or resistance to their culinary offerings with resentment. If a parent then begins to nag, insist, and fuss over it, the child may become stubborn and dig in her heels. Tension during mealtimes will very likely follow.

Insisting that a child finish all the food put on his plate is one of the more common ways parents set an unpleasant mealtime behavior pattern. Frequently, a cycle develops in which the child refuses to eat at meals, and when she becomes hungry between meals, she expects to be fed, as any child of a caring parent would. Because the between-meal foods may be more appealing than the dishes served during proper meals, the child may like this cycle. But it sets up poor eating habits. No harm will come to the child by refusing to give her between-meal snacks for a few days. Respond to complaints of between-meal hunger matter-of-factly. Resist the temptation to point out that you predicted hunger would follow refusal to eat at the proper time. Once a pattern of accusations and "I told you sos" is launched, a child may decide that she has found a good way to get attention.

If your child fusses over food only occasionally, it may be that she is signaling a need for more attention and wants more close and intimate contact than she is getting. A week or so of especially relaxed mealtimes with pleasant chats without reference to the eating problems should help reestablish normal eating habits.

Picky eaters and food binges

It is common for children at this age to go through a period of being picky eaters. Occasional modifications in the menu to accommodate a child's preferences are all right. Sometimes a particular dish will be rejected at home but readily accepted elsewhere and vice versa. Children's food preferences fluctuate and are frequently influenced by those of their peers. But as long as the food offered is nutritious, there is no reason not to expect even a picky eater either to eat it or abstain until the next meal. No child will suffer much by skipping a few meals.

Binges are also characteristic. Children seem to want to eat exactly the same food at every meal for what seems to be a long time. As long as the food is reasonably nutritious and accompanied by milk, juice, or another nutritious drink, no harmful consequences are likely to follow.

Acquiring manners

It takes time for children to pick up the details and habits of good table manners. If they start to play with food, building castles out of mashed potatoes, simply remove it with a straightforward comment about what food is for.

Preparation, consumption, and attitudes toward food are central parts of all cultures, which are learned gradually and which should be strongly associated with pleasant family contacts rather than great anxiety over impending starvation.

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Punishment and Preschoolers

Lilian G. Katz

Most young children need limits and restraints on their way to becoming fully competent adults. When or whether a young child's failure to comply with rules warrants punishment, and what kinds of punishment are most effective, worries many parents. Some of the following guidelines may be useful to you as you try to decide what's best for your child and family.

Compliance and internalization

Physical punishment does not enhance a child's sense of responsibility for self-discipline.

It may be helpful to think about issues related to punishment in terms of two goals: compliance with adult rules and expectations, and their internalization—the ability of the child to know within himself or herself the difference between right and wrong. Some evidence suggests that strong punishment alone tends to lead to compliance only if the child believes she might get caught. However, when mild punishment is accompanied by simple reasons for the rules, a child tends to internalize the adult's expectations, irrespective of her beliefs about being caught. It seems also that the mildest external pressure that will obtain a child's compliance promotes the greatest internalization of the rules. Since parents want to instill self-discipline through internalization of the rules, it seems best to use mild punishment, if any at all, and simple explanations of the limits.

Fitting the "crime"

Mild though the punishment may be, it can be difficult, in the case of preschoolers, to come up with a punishment to fit the crime. Withholding privileges is a little beyond the grasp of most preschoolers and rarely prevents unwanted behavior. Removing a child from interaction stops the behavior—at least temporarily—but doesn't encourage internalization of parents' expectations and, furthermore, may lead to a taste for revenge.

On the other hand, merely issuing threats about the consequences of disobedience has certain drawbacks. At least one problem with threats is that they signal loss of control. Another is that it is difficult to know what dire consequence to promise. And finally, unfulfilled threats diminish what may already be flagging credibility. It's important to back up your words with action.

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Whatever you do, don't get physical. Physical punishment is never the preferred response to a preschooler's transgression. To strike a child in "hot blood" when she has deliberately disobeyed you and missed by a hair's breadth being run over by a truck is forgivable, but it is not likely to teach the child the proverbial lesson. This kind of punishment illustrates well the notion that punishment typically makes the punisher feel better but rarely advances a child's sense of responsibility for self-discipline.

Also, studies suggest that in some cases of children who constantly disobey their parents, severity of punishment has to be increased continually if it is to remain effective. Thus, parents can easily start out punishing with a mild tap on the bottom or restraining a child with a slightly raised voice, but inevitably both of these responses have to reach a level of severity that must be stopped. So it's best to avoid them altogether.

Be simple and direct

Decide what behavior limits really matter to you and your family. Stay with your expectations until your child can clearly see from your firmness and persistence that you actually mean what you say.

Many parents forget that, with preschoolers, much unwanted behavior can be stopped simply by a clear and firm demand. Try to recall your own early years and how intimidating an angry adult could be just by speaking firmly. Most young children look for signs when anger is real, so don't abuse the power of your anger to stop unwanted behavior by overuse. Reserve your anger and punishment for something really serious, which means both should be rare.

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The Whiner

Lilian G. Katz

Most children whine. But while it's clear that children of all ages are prone to this kind of behavior on some occasions, some experts say that whining seems to reach a peak with children of three or four years and gradually subsides after the age of four.

Persistent whining, and the clinging to Mom's skirt or climbing all over Dad's lap that often goes with it, is almost always annoying. It can be especially maddening in some circumstances: when relatives are looking on scornfully, when you're in a situation in which you don't want to make a scene, or when you are tired and weary yourself.

Reasons for the behavior

Fatigue is surely the most common contributor to this kind of cry for comfort and security. When children who rarely whine begin to do so, it may signal the onset of a cold or another illness that starts with vague aches and pains that a child cannot point to directly or explain. In a few cases, the behavior may have been learned from a model. Perhaps your youngster has observed another child or even an adult succeed in getting his way by using this kind of unrelenting but low-intensity fussing and complaining.

Mixed signals about expectations for behaior may account for persistent whining.

It is important to note that a whining child usually doesn't use this tactic on everyone. The teacher or babysitter may not receive much whining at all from a child who continuously whines with her mother.

A common factor behind a pattern of persistent whining seems to be that the person to whom it is addressed gives the child mixed or unclear signals about the limits and expectations for behavior. Sometimes a parent changes her mind about the rules too often or too readily. Sometimes the parent is indulgent and gives in to the child's demands until her patience reaches the breaking point. She may then turn on the child harshly and thereby upset the child even further. This pattern of whining, which annoys the parent, thus prompting more whining, signals a power struggle between the child and the adult. It is best to avoid such struggles if you can. But when you can't, it's best for the parent to "win" because it is in a child's best interest to understand that he or she is loved by an adult whom he or she can look up to and per-

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ceive as strong, in charge, and thus a source of security.

Coping

Obviously, it is better to prevent whining from occurring at all than to have to scold a child for it. If a child seems to fuss out of boredom or loneliness, she may be helped by having more things of interest to do, more and different friends, and often, more time alone with parents. In some cases more rest will do the trick.

Keep in mind that the behavior will surely stop if it fails to have an effect. Of course, ignoring a whiner, or not acceding to his or her demands, is easier said than done. But a child cannot stop the pattern without your help.

To break a pattern of whining, respond to it by taking a firm position on whatever the child is demanding. If you find it difficult to give a firm no or ignore a child's constant demands, it may be because you feel guilty about something. Perhaps you wish you had more time to have fun with your child. Maybe so. But the child's whining will not alleviate the guilt, and it should be clear to both of you that whining only makes the time that you are together unpleasant and joyless. Maybe the child will put up a loud fuss for what seems like forever. But you simply have to stick it out until the child knows that you mean business.

Not a pretty sound

Whatever the underlying cause, whining is not fun for anyone. The child doesn't really enjoy whining, and it is difficult for a child to have a reasonable sense of self-esteem or self-respect if she is constantly fussing and being rebuffed for doing so. And it is certainly very difficult for adults to enjoy a child who whines.

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Making Friends

Lilian G. Katz

Being able to make friends and get along with other children during childhood has important far-reaching consequences in later life. Many specialists studying the long-term development of social competence claim that if valuable peer-relations skills are not developed early, social-adjustment problems may arise later during adolescence and adulthood.

These dire warnings do not suggest that all young children must become social butterflies. It is important for all children to be able to work, play, or just be alone contentedly some of the time. But a child who is alone because she cannot engage in satisfying interaction with other children should be helped to learn how to do so.

The art of making friends

Though making friends seems to come naturally to most children, it requires a good deal of experience and usually involves lots of trial and error. Observations of children successful in making friends indicate that they use such skills as giving appropriate responses to their own actions or the actions of others, like "Excuse me" or "Thanks a lot." They also make positive suggestions to others, offer to help and to contribute to others' activities, use phrases that encourage an exchange of information, like "You know what?" and readily respond in turn with "No! What?" They are likely to express their desires clearly, to request information from others about their intentions and wishes, to refrain from calling attention to themselves, and to enter ongoing conversations on, rather than off, the current topic. They also seem to know how to establish mutual interests by exploring ways in which they are similar to other children: likes, experiences, or characteristics they and their peers have in common.

The groundwork for the ability to make friends is laid very early in life.

The parents' role

Recent research suggests that parents have an important role in helping develop and refine their children's friendship-making skills. As it is in many other aspects of children's development, having warm, supportive, and encouraging parents to which the child feels deeply, securely, and affectionately attached seems to be basic to the development of social competence. Not surprisingly, there is ample reason to believe that parents' own interactions with their friends provide the young child with

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models and cues about the skills involved. Parents' behavior indicates to their children the value the parents place on friendships. It also lets children know that their parents are concerned with the feelings of others. Parents can help children by asking from time to time about the feelings of their children's close friends—simple questions like "How does Sally feel about...[a favorite game or a school outing]?" Parents also pay a role when they help their children interpret their friends' feelings, and when they teach them to resist jumping to premature conclusions in interpreting their friends' behavior. Parents can also provide a model that shows children how to respect someone with whom they disagree. Respecting someone we agree with is easy by contrast.

Provide lots of opportunities

Some activities are more conducive to the development of social skills than others—a youngster is far more likely to be in a position to test his social skills at the neighborhood playground than at home with a boxful of toys. Opportunities for spontaneous, unstructured play among young children under the supervision of a knowledgeable adult are essential. Many children who have difficulty making friends become excluded from social activities, and thus have less experience and fewer opportunities to develop, learn, practice, and refine the skills they lack. It takes seven or eight years to develop and refine the wide range of skills required for friendship making and keeping. Thus it is a good idea to start early in providing a child with lots of warmth and support, and with frequent opportunities to make and keep friends.

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Smoothing Out Bedtime

Lilian G. Katz

Almost all young children seem angelic when they are asleep. But getting them into that blessed state is often more of a hassle than it should be.

Like adults, children vary in the amount of sleep they can get by with. There is no set number of hours required for all three- or four-year-olds. The best way to determine whether your child is getting enough sleep is to watch his reactions to more or less sleep and to establish an earlier bedtime if he is irritable from staying up too late. Most parents are familiar with the annoying fussiness that even the easiest children exhibit when they are tired. Keep in mind that sleep is one of the good things that children can hardly get too much of.

Establish routines

Allowing children to go without naps or postponing bedtime may be the path of least resistance at the moment, but it is very likely to backfire in the form of strained relations and a poorer quality of time together. For working mothers, the desire to gain time with the children by postponing bedtime must be weighed against the quality of the time that is gained. By setting up a shorter period of time when you can focus attention on your child, you will be able to enjoy the time you spend with him more than by keeping him up past his bedtime.

Make the last hour or two before bedtime low-key and relaxing.

It is generally a good idea to establish a regular bedtime, even if the child does not always fall asleep at the appointed hour. For many children it is helpful to make the last hour or two before the set time low-key and relaxing. Some children have trouble settling down after watching dramatic and tension-filled television shows. They won't miss out on anything important if the television is turned off well before bedtime.

Simple routines, like brushing teeth, bathing, and undressing in a fairly regular sequence, can help establish and maintain the regularity of bedtime. The last hour of the day is an ideal time for storytelling — stories about the day's activities in which the child himself is a main character go over well. It is also an ideal moment for reading books or just chatting about feelings, concerns, plans, and events.

Be firm and clear

If the bedtime routine becomes too elaborate and fixed, it can easily turn into a ritual, and a child may haggle about minor omissions and variations and extend the process of settling down far too long. Some bedtime rituals allow the child to manipulate the parent and gain control over the bedtime process. It is not a good idea, for instance, to reinforce a child's demand that every single teddy bear and doll in the room has to get a good-night kiss every night.

Some children put up a fuss at bedtime because they associate going to their room or separation from the ongoing family life with being punished. If a child resists going to bed by complaining about other family members' still being up and about, indicate gently and firmly that it is your judgment that she needs rest at this particular time; even though you may have to repeat it for a week or two, if you stay firm and clear about your decision, your judgment will eventually be accepted.

Many children stretch things out by coming out of their bedroom and attempting to rejoin the rest of the family. It helps to return the child calmly to her room on each such occasion with a firm but low-key reminder that you have decided that the day's activities have drawn to a close.

It is all right if a child feels more relaxed with a night-light, and some seem to prefer to have their door open until they fall asleep.

Many preschool teachers report that for more than a few youngsters, fatigue during school hours undermines some of the potential benefits of daytime activities and learning opportunities. If your child goes to a preschool or day care center, it might be a good idea to find out whether she often is too tired to get the most out of the experience.

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"Well, Excuse Me!"

Lilian G. Katz

It's been said that good manners make it possible for us to get along with people we don't really like. Most of us take a less cynical view. We see manners as expressions of respect for the feelings and needs of others; they can lend a certain graciousness to social life. But learning them takes time, and most children need a little help along the way.

More than "please" and "thank you"

Much of what comes under the heading of manners consists of gestures by which we express consideration for others. Rituals like saying "please," "thank you," and "I beg your pardon" symbolize our awareness of others' feelings. They can be learned gradually, and most likely through a combination of imitating adults and receiving gentle reminders when the occasion warrants it. Although no serious consequences are likely to follow from omitting these courtesies, adhering to them smooths the flow of social interaction among strangers and intimates alike.

The fine points of social life cannot be learned in a day.

Some manners, however, when omitted constitute instances of rudeness that are more annoying. For example, young children often have a difficult time learning to wait for their turn to speak and not to interrupt others' conversations. If most members of the family are verbose and compete for a chance to be heard, family gatherings can become quite contentious. Learning to take one's turn on such occasions requires time and patience from adults. It would be unrealistic to expect a three- or four-year-old to withhold her exciting contribution to the discussion for very long. While it is important to let children know that it is bad manners to interrupt, constant interruptions are probably an inevitable part of life with young children.

Yet another aspect of manners concerns consideration for others' feelings, especially about themselves. Thus a young child who asks a visiting relative, "How come you're so fat?" needs help in learning the complexities of when honesty is brutal rather than best. But it is not realistic to expect a preschooler to make such subtle distinctions.

Helpful hints

As you strive to help your child master the fine points of good manners, the following hints may prove useful.

Parents as well-mannered models probably provide the best teaching method. Most of the social graces are picked up from the environment.

Discourage "bad" manners gracefully. If a child makes a real *faux pas*, explanations and chastisements are best given after the event in the safety of home.

Try to focus on one or two aspects of manners at a time. Mastery of table manners may be enough for a three-year-old to handle at one time.

Resist the temptation to scold a child who has been brutally frank. Even though your child may have embarrassed you, the subtleties of "white lies" are usually beyond children of this age. When a child has been too blunt, it is a good idea to protect her from the anger of the offended adult. Don't let the hurt adult turn on your child. The feelings of the adult who takes offense at the frankness of a small child are not as important as the child's need to be reassured by her parents that the error she made is not a fatal one.

Teaching a child to apologize and say she is sorry is probably best treated casually. A forced apology is not very worthwhile, especially when the perpetrator is unable to feel genuine sorrow. The best bet is simply to indicate to the child without rancor what behavior you prefer and expect the next time the situation occurs. Don't be surprised if the child needs many reminders before the preferred behavior becomes a habit.

Resist the temptation to extort manners. Demanding a "please" before giving a child something doesn't teach considerateness effectively; on the contrary, it may sow the seeds of bitterness.

Finally, relax and don't rush. These fine points of social life cannot be learned in a day.

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Squabbles, Battles and Fights

Lilian G. Katz

Like all other common behavior of young children, squabbling and bickering can have a variety of causes. Understanding some of them may help to put this annoying behavior into perspective and make it easier to deal with.

What's mine is mine

One of the most common provocations for squabbles is a youngster's possessions. Parents are often surprised and a little annoyed when their child raises a fuss over a visitor taking possession of a toy she herself has not touched in months. It is tempting in such cases to chastise the child for suddenly caring about the object because the visitor wants to look at it or play with it. But the protestations of the young owner are part of the process of learning what possession really means and how permanent it is. In addition, the squabble may be symbolic of a larger issue — the child may want and need reassurance that her place in the household is not changed by the presence of the visitor. In such cases it is best to reassure the child by reaffirming her rights as the true owner, and to remind her that though the precious and previously neglected object is indeed hers, the visitor will appreciate a turn with it. Moralizing about kindness and sharing might work in such situations, but such strategies are unlikely to aid the child's quest for reassurance and understanding in the long run.

Young children learn the rules of group living from normal altercations in the household.

A bid for parental attention

Some children seem to know intuitively — or perhaps from experience — that one of the easiest ways to get a rise out of a parent is to start a squabble. This generally occurs while the parent is on the phone or driving the car. Some of these incidents may be caused by a desire for attention. However, it is useful to remember that children are often "taught" to demand a high degree of attention. They don't necessarily need it. It is wise to put a stop to such behavior. Just because children demand attention does not mean that they should get it. It may be that they simply have "learned" to expect too much of it.

Hang up the phone or stop the car at the nearest safe spot and indicate clearly and firmly that you want the behavior to stop. Stay with the situation until you have

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achieved credibility and the children involved really believe that you mean business. Although it may not be obvious from appearances, most children feel reassured and safer in a household in which the adults mean what they say.

Learning from experience

It seems clear from recent research that young children learn many skills and much about the rules of group living from the normal altercations in the household. In the context of such conflicts, they can learn, for example, turn-taking skills, how to present an argument, and how to rationalize one's own needs; they also can increase their understanding of another child's point of view. Intervention by adults is not always required. If most of the interactions the children in the household have with one another are pleasant and cooperative, and the bickering is the exception rather than the rule, adult intervention in these infrequent conflicts probably isn't warranted.

Adult help is justified if the same child in the group is always the victim and another always the victor. Such patterns may indicate that one child is learning how to be bossy or, even worse, a bully. In such cases, it is a good idea to teach the victim strategies for resisting the bully, at the same time helping the bully to find other ways of getting attention and achieving satisfying interactions with other children.

Don't, however, expect your teachings to "take" immediately. Wholesome interaction with peers involves many skills and understandings that take a long time to learn.

If one of the participants seems to use these incidents to whine or seems to overreact to the behavior of the other child, it may be that he uses these altercations to get sympathy and could benefit from increased time alone with a parent.

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In the Company of Friends

Lilian G. Katz

Enjoying the company of friends is not merely one of the good things of life. Contemporary research indicates that the failure to acquire friendship-making skills during the early years is associated with a variety of social difficulties in adolescence and adulthood. Furthermore, research shows that having friendships contributes to the capacity to cope with the inevitable crises that arise throughout life. It appears that the groundwork for the ability to make and sustain friendships is laid very early in life.

Although the ability to make friends seems to come naturally to most children, not all of them learn to do so without help. A close look at peer interaction in the early years shows that it involves many complex skills that take time and practice to learn and experience to polish.

Playing with others requires essential social skills such as initiating contact with unfamiliar peers, negotiating who will play what role, who will take the lead, whose turn it is, for example, to hold the doll or be the driver. Peer play frequently calls upon the need to be assertive about one's rights and possessions, the need to back down in a dispute, the capacity to handle being rebuffed, and many other social competencies. Given the importance of successful peer play and its complexity, it is not surprising that early on most children benefit from the support, suggestions, and supervision of adults.

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Family matters

It is a good idea to remember that children's peer interactive styles are, in large part, modeled upon what they have observed at home. Even young children pick up on such basic qualities as warmth and hostility, trust and mistrust, friendliness, and give-and-take.

Children can also be helped when they are encouraged to ponder the behavior of other children. Instead of simply letting a child describe another as "mean" or "weird," encourage her to think of other interpretations of the events that led to her use of those adjectives. This strategy should ultimately lead to the child's becoming more tolerant, more accepting of and open to others and to their points of view.

Learning to negotiate

When difficulties arise in your child's friendships, resist the temptation to inter-

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fere too quickly. It is known that friends squabble more than non-friends, and renegotiating the relationship following the squabble is a very important skill to develop. When your child seems unable to solve the problem without help, intervene by making suggestions in experimental form. For example, you might say to her, "Try x, and see if that helps. If not, come back and we'll think of something else to try."

When difficulties arise, either because a friendship is volatile and rocky or because it fails to develop, resist the temptation to be overly sympathetic. If your commiseration is too great, it may signal to your child that there is a real tragedy in the making. Rather, take a matter-of-fact approach, suggesting either that perhaps this particular child or group of children may have different interests or that it would be a good idea to try alternative approaches or other activities.

Positive interaction

For some preschoolers whose social skills are fragile, time spent with somewhat younger children may have positive effects. While older, more competent children may be impatient with a preschooler and thus weaken her confidence, younger ones with less sophisticated social skills may be more accepting, strengthen her confidence, and thereby provide needed opportunities to improve on the skills she has and to learn new ones.

Most children benefit from having peers invited to their home for relaxed visits, when play can be encouraged and closely supervised. It is also a good idea to know your child's playmates well so that you can minimize problems and provide the kinds of play situations most likely to maximize interest and cooperation.

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Preparing for Preschool

Lilian G. Katz

It's natural to want the best of everything for one's child. It comes with all the other aspects of caring and deep devotion to others. So it is hardly surprising that some parents become anxious about getting their children into just the "right" preschool. Some of the main issues involved in this matter that may help to put the problem in perspective are taken up below.

Selecting a preschool

The process of selecting a preschool should include several steps, the most important of which are visits and talks with the staff and parents of current and former participating youngsters. These steps provide the basis for judging the appropriateness of the educational program, the quality of the staff-child relationships, and provisions for illness and emergencies. You will also want to consider convenience of location and transportation. The unique characteristics of your child and the kind of atmosphere and activities she is likely to be most comfortable with are also important matters to consider.

The unique characteristics of your own child are important to take into account.

Gaining admission

Unfortunately, selecting a good preschool and actually getting into the school you've selected can be two very different things. Preschools with long waiting lists may require applicants to achieve particular test scores and have satisfactory interviews for admission. But such a practice should cause some reservations about the school's priorities.

For one thing, there are serious doubts about the reliability and validity of brief tests given to normal preschool children by strangers in unfamiliar conditions. One of the most troublesome aspects of the severe competition for places in select preschools is that for some children the pressure to perform on the "entrance exams" is debilitating. Even for experienced adults, anxiety over a test can undermine performance. Young children are very likely to perform below their true abilities under such pressure.

Furthermore, even if the tests used in such cases were valid, it is not clear that young children benefit from being in groups segregated by ability. The programs in such schools can easily become excessively academically oriented, competitive, and stressful. It is a good idea to keep in mind that no child should be working at the upper and outer edges of his or her ability constantly. There should be a balance so

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that he or she has some activities that come easily, some that engage the attention, and some that are challenging.

Preparing for the test and the outcome

If getting a good preschool experience for your child requires high test scores, you can probably minimize the stress by helping her to prepare for it in a relaxed and reassuring manner. Let her know that she may feel uncomfortable at first, that you have confidence in her, that she does not have to know all the answers to the questions she will be asked, and that no matter what the outcome, you will still love her.

Keeping your anxieties to yourself

In cases of tough competition for acceptance, the reality is that some children will inevitably be turned away, and it is possible that parents may unknowingly convey a sense of pretest anxiety and posttest disappointment that could have long-term effects on their child's self-confidence.

Resist the temptation to blame your child in the event your efforts fail. Other satisfactory arrangements can usually be worked out, and there is no compelling evidence that your child's future life chances are jeopardized by not attending a particular preschool.

The prestige factor

Some schools appeal to parents' striving for status and acceptance by their peers and their desire to be seen as conscientious parents. Characteristics of the child herself, how she responds to groups of children, what activities she seems attracted to, and other aspects of her life are more relevant considerations in selecting a preschool than the desire for prestige and status among other parents.

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What Should Preschoolers Be Taught?

Lilian G. Katz

What preschoolers should be taught, as well as when and how, are controversial topics among parents and educators. According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the largest membership organization concerned with young children, "early childhood learning activities must be appropriate to the child's age and stage and personal interests" to be successful.

Developmentally speaking

The developmental approach is used in shaping appropriate teaching practice in two senses: the normative sense, which concerns what most children at a given age and stage can and cannot do; and the dynamic, or individual, sense, which, according to NAEYC, takes into account that "each child is a unique person with an individual pattern and timing of growth."

While the normative dimension tells us what most young children can do and can learn, it does not tell us what they should do or should learn. The question of what is most appropriate for young children to do and to learn must be judged against our best understanding of what best serves their developmental interests later on.

Negative consequences of starting preschoolers on the three Rs show up later.

Categories of learning

There are at least four categories of learning to be considered:

Feelings

While most feelings are probably innate, some that should be learned in the preschool period would include feeling comfortable with some people outside of the immediate family and away from home and feeling reasonably confident and generally accepted by other children.

Dispositions

Some that need to be strengthened in the early years include curiosity, inventiveness, cooperativeness, and persistence in doing tasks.

Neither feelings nor dispositions are learned through lecture or instruction. Feeling accepted is learned from interactive experiences in which others' acceptance is clearly communicated. Dispositions are most likely learned from role models; they are also strengthened, or weakened, by adults' responses to their manifestation. If we want to strengthen a child's disposition to be curious, for instance, opportunities to

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be curious must be provided and followed up by acknowledgement and appreciation.

Knowledge

While there are seldom arguments about what feelings and dispositions should be learned in the early years, the matter of what knowledge and skills are appropriate is likely to be more controversial. Developmentally, the knowledge most appropriate for young children is that which helps them to make better sense of their own experiences and environment. When the knowledge presented is too far in advance of children's understanding, it may undermine their confidence in their own intellects in the long term. They are likely to learn to hide their confusions and misconceptions, to withhold their questions and doubts.

Skills

The list of skills to be learned in the early years is potentially very long and varied. They would include social skills, communicative skills, fine and gross motor skills, and many others. Many parents want their children started on academic skills like the three R's in preschool. But there is reason to believe that when children work too soon and too long at academic exercises, they do so at the expense of their dispositions to apply the very skills they are learning. This is sometimes called "academic burn-out," suggesting that the negative consequences of starting preschoolers on the three Rs show up later—when their earlier willingness to do meaningless exercises becomes exhausted, and they begin to tune out a large proportion of the learning tasks at school.

Words of wisdom

From a developmental point of view, it is better to begin children on formal instruction a little late than too early.

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First Days of Preschool

Lilian G. Katz

The first days at preschool can be unsettling to many preschoolers and to some of their parents as well. Some children become anxious about how to cope all at once with the new adults, groups of strange children, and unfamiliar surroundings. Other children are more upset by the separation from home than by the new experiences. Still others make the transition to the new world with few hesitations. Whatever your youngster's pattern of adjustment turns out to be, the ideas outlined below may help.

"I'm okay, you're okay"

It is easier to help your child through the adjustment period if you are sure the environment she is entering is a sound and sensitive one. Such confidence will make it easier for you to reassure her that she will be all right. Many children pick up their parents' uncertainties and anxieties and persist in behavior that will either get them reassurance or cause a change in plans.

Make the goodbyes short, sweet, warm, and firm.

Easing in

It is invariably helpful to plan one or two visits to the setting with your youngster in advance of enrollment. Having a friend or sibling who already attends the preschool or who starts at the same time as your child can make the new experience easier and more interesting.

Some children find it comforting to take along a favorite object, like a teddy bear, small toy, or story book, that can serve as a bit of home during the adjustment period. It is best to wait for a child to ask for such a "transition object" rather than to suggest it yourself. It is not a good idea for adults to behave as though they agree with the child that a piece of old blanket can keep her safe, but it is generally wise to respect a child's desire to cling to something familiar in times of stress. Most children spontaneously give up these symbolic comforts by the time they enter kindergarten.

If you suspect your child will put up a struggle or find the new experience painful, plan to spend some time with her in the class during the first few days. Ask the teacher to help you decide when it is all right to reduce the time.

Avoid mixed signals

If you react to your child's hesitation or upset about going to preschool by offering her a reward or a bribe, such as promising

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a special treat for good behavior, you may signal that she has cause to be upset.

Tears are understandable

Resist the temptation to threaten or tease a child about being a "cry baby." Rarely does such a strategy help. Reassure your child that it is all right to cry when you miss someone you love. Remind her that you will be reunited every day, and that as she gradually makes new friends and gets used to things, she will not miss Mom and home so painfully.

...but please hold yours till she's out of sight

If you are one of those parents who is tempted to cry when the little one disappears into the nursery crowd, hold on until the child is well out of sight and sound! While it is only natural to become upset at separations, one frequent reaction to such crying is irritation and anger with oneself—mainly because of feelings of helplessness in the face of your child's tearful suffering. But anger usually makes matters worse and may even set the stage for a power struggle. It is usually helpful to make the good-byes short, sweet, warm, and firm.

Offer support and understanding

Instead of asking your child whether she'll be okay, indicate that you believe she will do fine, and there will be people at the school ready to help her if necessary. Be careful not to promise that it will be all fun from the word "go." For some children that may be so, but for most, who feel they belong to their families, some upset at separation and uneasiness in the new surroundings should be expected. Accept the child's feelings without dwelling on them, and let her know that you understand that it takes time to get used to new people and places.

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Decisions, Decisions

Lilian G. Katz

One of the advantages—and pleasures—of living in a modern society is having a range of choices in many of the aspects of life that we consider important. Most of our children begin to exercise their option to make choices very early on in the scheme of things, picking and choosing among playthings, playmates, breakfast cereals, and clothes.

Learning to choose

Decisions in the early years are likely to prompt considerable pondering over the possible consequences of each choice. However, as children grow older, decisions and choices provide occasions for exercising the faculties of imagination and prediction—imagining how each alternative will play itself out and predicting the feelings that are likely to be generated in each of the possible alternative circumstances. Early experiences with making choices and decisions can be expected to help young children develop feelings of competence in decision making and responsibility for the choices they make. This can only occur, however, if the choices are real and the child is expected to stick with his or her decision. As long as the parent is sure that each of the possible choices available to the child won't harm or hurt the child in any way, the exercise will likely be fruitful and instructive.

Young children are seldom consistently capable of selecting what is in their best interests.

A parent's role

However, there are many aspects of life children cannot and should not be asked to decide upon for themselves. Children, for instance, cannot choose whether to be vaccinated against measles, or whether or not to go to school, to learn to read, or to go to bed. Parents, by virtue of their greater experience, knowledge, and wisdom, must make those decisions and others like them on their children's behalf. Children cannot be given the power to determine their participation in events and experiences that have significant long-term consequences.

Try not to waver

It is important for parents to remember that children have only as much power as adults cede to them. Should youngsters get the idea that there are weak spots in the adults' stance and that the grown-ups will give in after a modicum of fussing, a tug of wills is likely to ensue time and again.

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It is not difficult to understand why, in some cases, it almost becomes easier to let a child have the last word than to stand your ground. For example, occasionally a preschooler decides that she doesn't want to go to school. Most parents can relate to this, since even they have days when going to work seems to be such a chore. It is not hard to imagine how the child might be feeling. It is so easy to give in, especially if you are in a hurry and have other things to worry about. Giving in to your child on one or two occasions seems reasonable and fair. But what if it happens two or three times a month? It's best for parents to establish clearly at the outset who is going to determine where their preschooler will be spending his or her time.

The danger of letting kids decide

The same kinds of issues arise if a child is allowed to choose all his own toys or television shows. Letting the child make the choices undoubtedly reduces the hassle. But young children are seldom consistently capable of selecting what is in their own best interests. Many expensive toys, played with only occasionally, are wasteful of the family's resources, and buying them may provide a less-than-healthy lesson about the relative value of things. Similarly, many children, given the opportunity, habitually select television shows that are disturbing to them and lacking in any real value. In such cases, it is best that the authority to make those choices be exercised and maintained by parents.

Balance in child rearing

Like most aspects of child rearing, too little or too much of whatever one does can be equally harmful. Young children's development can be enhanced when they have an optimum (rather than a maximum or minimum) number of choices.

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Those Delicate Questions about Sex

Lilian G. Katz

Most preschoolers have learned quite a bit about sex even before they begin asking specific questions. They have been making observations of anatomical differences among themselves and between themselves and adults and older children of both sexes. Inevitably, though, questions will be asked.

Why parents shy away from "that subject"

Somehow it's easier for parents to answer children's questions about almost any other subject than about sexual matters. Parents are often disappointed by their own embarrassment on these awkward occasions.

It is precisely because sexual matters are intimate, private, and personal that they are uncomfortable to discuss. In a certain sense, parents' embarrassment indicates that they value these aspects of sexuality and that they want children to see sex as a family matter, strongly linked to love, affection, and closeness.

The best responses are to the point, giving just the information requested.

Most parents don't want their children to talk about intimate matters, including sex and reproduction, in the same way or in the same forum in which they talk about other subjects. For example, they don't want children to ask strangers what kind of body parts they have, even though it is not appropriate to scold young children when they do so. To help implant values of privacy and intimacy, parents can give gentle reminders that some things are not done or talked about in public or outside the family. Emphasis on privacy and intimacy does not have to convey fear or anxiety about sexual matters. Nor should it include any sense of disgust or revulsion that might cause children to associate the subject with feelings of shame.

Wait for the questions

It is a good idea to let the child take the initiative in raising questions. The best responses are to the point, giving just the information requested on that particular occasion. Most of us tend to offer too much information at one time. The chances are that young children tune out the excess information and no harm is done by it. But there is no need to launch into a lengthy, detailed discussion when a simple, accurate explanation will do.

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It is also a good idea to answer children's questions promptly. The temptation to put off a child by saying, "I'll tell you all about it when you are old enough to understand," may introduce an element of anxiety, or even dread, into the child's feelings about sexuality. In some cases, postponement of discussion heightens curiosity and leads to experimentation. Although this is not necessarily dangerous, it is a poor substitute for learning about such important matters from those he trusts and feels closest to.

Giving truthful answers to children's questions about sex is also a good idea. Not only is it unnecessary to lie about the facts of life, but inasmuch as children will learn the truth from someone else sooner or later, having to learn it from others may undermine the trust a child has in her parents.

The anatomical differences between children and adults are often overwhelming to small children and may lead to greater confusion rather than understanding. For this reason, it is probably a good idea to minimize nudity of adults around the house. However, those inevitable occasions when parents are exposed should be treated calmly and matter-of-factly.

Lessons best learned at home

Recent anxiety about widespread sexual abuse of young children has made many parents also feel anxious to inform their children about appropriate body contact and how to resist inappropriate approaches. Some schools are even considering teaching young children about these concerns. Preschool children are too young to grasp such distinctions. They are likely either to tune out such instructions or become confused or anxious about them. Learning the facts of life takes time and should begin as a matter between parents and children, right at home.

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family living

Assessing Your Preschooler's Development

Lilian G. Katz

Few parents make it through their child's early years without occasionally thinking they should consult a counselor about the way things are going. It can be difficult to judge development—there is no simple equivalent to a fever to indicate that something is wrong with a child and that help is needed.

An observation period

To determine if a preschooler needs special help, it's important to get an idea of how he or she functions over a month-long period. This allows you to take into account the occasional exceptionally stressful or hectic days that can affect young children temporarily.

Use the following guidelines to help you gauge whether your child's development is going well. A three- or four-year-old child should:

Most children experience some rough spots in the long period of development.

Usually fall asleep easily and wake up refreshed. Occasional restless nights or grumpy mornings are all right, of course, but a typical pattern of deep sleep and morning eagerness to get on with life are good signs.

Eat with appetite most of the time. Skipping a meal or refusing food occasionally is normal. Obsessive or compulsive eating may require intervention .

Typically have bowel and bladder control, especially during the day. Some accidents are still likely at this age, and bed-wetting is not an indication of a serious problem.

Exhibit a range of emotions. Help may be needed if a child's mood rarely changes or if his emotions are low in intensity.

Accept adult authority more often than not. Some resistance to adult authority is healthy. However, both constant resistance or unfailing compliance may signal excessive insecurity.

Sometimes show spontaneous affection to at least one significant person in her life. A child who is developing well is likely to let someone nearby know that life is wonderful. Excessive demonstrations of affection may indicate a child's doubts about the strength of attachment with others.

Show that he can initiate, maintain, and enjoy a relationship with at least one other

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child. A child who plays alone is not in trouble as long as he is not doing so because of excessive fear or lack of confidence in relating to other children. A child whose interactions with others are marked by hostility, tension, bullying, or submissiveness may need help.

Vary her play over a period of a few weeks. New elements should be added into the play, even if the same materials are being used. Excessive repetitive, unremitting, or ritualistic play patterns can indicate the need for professional counseling.

Exhibit a sense of curiosity, adventure, and even mischief on occasion. If the child never pokes into the unknown or snoops where he is forbidden, he may be experiencing excessive fear of punishment or high anxiety.

Demonstrate his capacity for sustained involvement and interest in something besides himself. A preschooler's capacity for interest should increase to longer and longer intervals of involvement with activities, games, and play. Professional help may be needed if a child cannot immerse himself in an activity or stay with simple ones to completion.

Show readiness to enjoy the good things in life. If a child is so afraid of something that she would rather miss out on interesting activities, then counseling might be needed.

Most children experience rough spots in development, but as long as the problem does not prevent a child from enjoying things, it is reasonably safe to assume it will pass.

When help is needed

If after a long period of observation, you are still in doubt about your child's development, consult your doctor or your local mental-health agency. The value of counseling depends greatly on the confidence you have in the counselor, so it is a good idea to get recommendations from someone you trust. In some communities, the state, county, or city social agencies and hospitals provide information about counseling and psychological services.

Nudity at Home

Lilian G. Katz

Sometime during the preschool period the lively curiosity of children begins to include matters concerning anatomy; their own and other children's. At around age three, kids begin noticing that there are differences between boys and girls. Questions raised during this period, and on the inevitable occasions of nudity around the house, might be a little easier to handle after some reflection on how you view nudity and what you want to communicate to your children about it. Feelings about nudity vary from culture to culture. For some parents, modesty is of value; for others openness is preferred.

Modesty versus shame

If modesty and propriety concerning the human body and its various functions are values you wish your child to acquire, it would be a good idea to adopt discretion concerning nudity around the house during the early preschool years. Modesty implies a concern with proper times and places for intimate matters and experiences; it suggests to the child that you wish to keep some things exclusive to those people who are very close to you. One of the values of modesty training is that it underscores the special nature of relationships between family members. Children learn that there are certain things we just don't share with everyone and that the kind of intimacy fostered in the family is carried over to future intimate relationships.

Acknowledge that a child's curiosity is understandable, but indicate that there's a time and place for everything.

It is also very important to understand the differences between modesty and shame. In teaching and practicing modesty, we emphasize closeness, intimacy, and self-respect. Shame, on the other hand, is generated by implying that curiosity about the body or nakedness is bad or by suggesting that feelings of sexual arousal experienced even by a young child (such as a young boy having an erection when he or someone else is naked) are in some ways inappropriate or dirty. Scolding, teasing, or other strong reactions to curiosity, exploration, and exhibitionism (a child's deliberate act of running around naked) may make a young child feel guilty about early sexual feelings that are in fact quite natural and universal. It would help to respond to the child's feelings and curiosity by accepting and acknowledging them as understandable and at the same time by indicating that there's a time and place for everything.

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Adult nudity

While nakedness among children is natural and helps them learn about and accept sex differences, the picture is not so clear when it comes to children's exposure to adult nudity. Although there is no research on the effects of parental nudity on preschool children, experts have suggested that some children react with concern about the anatomical differences between themselves and their parents. A few may perceive adults' bodies as unpleasant, and some may feel comparatively inadequate or deformed. Relaxed, simple discussion of the differences between small children and adults and of how children's bodies will eventually change as they grow older should allay most concerns.

Let your views be known. If you feel comfortable with nudity, you will most likely let your child know that. If you are most comfortable being completely clothed around others and having privacy in the bathroom, then indicate this preference calmly to your child.

But in those inevitable situations when children come upon their parents undressed it is best to be fairly relaxed. You should answer the questions that arise matter-of-factly and to the point. Questions that young children ask often concern anatomy: Why does Mommy's or Daddy's body look different from mine? How come Mommy and Daddy have hair on their body and I don't? Answer their direct questions in a straightforward manner. Let them know, for example, that all adults have hair on their bodies and that they will, too, when they are older. Then bring the discussion to a close.

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Traveling with a Preschooler

Lilian G. Katz

Travel is one of the activities that makes summer a welcome season to many of us. But having to take a preschooler along doesn't necessarily add to its joys. It is probably a good idea to postpone pleasure travel until children are past the preschool years. However, if circumstances require travel with little ones, some of the following ideas may be especially helpful.

Brief hops instead of long leaps

Journeys with small children can be made a good deal more bearable if they are planned as a series of brief hops rather than one long haul. Long airplane rides are probably the most difficult for active preschoolers. It would easily be seen as unnatural to confine a preschooler's movements to one or two square feet for a three- or four-hour period at home, yet a long flight requires exactly that kind of restriction of space and action. Further, having to keep her from making loud noises or crying suggests that it would be wise to make absolutely sure the trip is a necessary one.

Take along a "bag of tricks" to entertain a child through long patches of road or air.

Long auto trips are a little easier for youngsters to handle than flights, mainly because travel can be interrupted at almost any time. During the ride, observe all the safety rules, especially fastening seat belts.

When the going gets tough

Almost all travel inevitably involves stretches of tedium either waiting to board a vehicle or being confined inside one. A "bag of tricks" containing some new toys, games, and picture books and storybooks will help entertain a child through some long patches of road or air. Some children are also comforted by having with them some of their familiar and favorite toys, books, and even blankets. So don't forget to pack them.

On-the-road behavior

No matter how well prepared you are, a certain amount of fidgeting and restlessness is bound to occur. If this breaks out into real disruptive behavior, be sure not to begin issuing threats you cannot keep. Similarly, be careful about promising special treats as rewards for good behavior. New patterns of behavior are unlikely to be learned on a trip; more typically, whatever patterns have been established will be exaggerated when the trip becomes tiring or stressful. Expecting your youngster to behave well most of the time should be the norm, not just something displayed for a promised reward. If you want her to be calm, quiet, or to sit still, ask her firmly to do so without making threats or promising her rewards.

Avoid big buildups

It is a good idea to avoid building up great expectations of what a wonderful time and big adventure everyone is going to have. What makes a trip interesting for adults usually has little appeal to a small child. Small ones are likely to find the light switches and water fountains far more interesting than the scenery around them. And, though they may tire of walking along famous streets past historic statues, they seem, remarkably, to find new sources of energy to run around just when the adults stop to rest.

Rest, for all concerned, is something you should keep in mind. Everyone's short temper due to fatigue can easily put a damper on a trip. So keep the plans for daily excursions very simple and allow for frequent, but brief, periods of needed rest.

Travel agrees with some, not with others

Like adults, some children are better travelers than others. You would be well advised to get to know your youngster's response to travel by keeping an eye on her reactions to new routines, foods, beds, and people. Be prepared for potential reactions, like constipation or stomach upsets or unknown allergies. If you can, try to stick as closely as possible to foods in your youngster's regular diet to lessen the likelihood of a reaction to food. It might also be wise to carry a supply of bottled water. In addition, it is always a good idea to carry basic first-aid supplies when traveling with children—just in case your rambunctious youngster sustains any scrapes on the journey.

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Monitoring TV Time

Lilian G. Katz

It is difficult for most young parents to imagine a world without television. Indeed, today's preschoolers are one of the first generations whose parents also grew up under television's powerful influence. Extensive research on the effects of television on children indicates that its potentially harmful as well as beneficial effects depend on many factors. Here are some points to keep in mind as you try to assess what's best for your preschooler.

What kind of television programs should my child watch?

Ample evidence is available to indicate that young children learn a variety of behavior from television — desirable and undesirable behavior. Children can learn from television that aggression is an acceptable way to settle conflict, and they can also learn that cooperation is often appreciated, admired, and rewarded.

Children can learn a variety of desirable--and undesirable--behaviors from television.

Some preschoolers have difficulty separating the fantastic from the real, especially when it comes to television fare; its vividness makes even the fantastic seem quite real and plausible to many young children. Some react with debilitating fearfulness to programs that depict violence or feature horror or suspense. It is therefore a good idea to monitor the content, messages, and style of the programs watched by your youngster. Though it takes some effort, it is worthwhile to identify enjoyable programs that reflect your own values and to limit your preschooler to watching only those that satisfy your criteria.

Although adults might ignore television commercials, young children generally fail to distinguish them from the other material presented. Therefore, part of your evaluation of the programs should include careful scrutiny of the commercial messages that accompany them. If your child persistently begs for products advertised on television, she may be watching the wrong kinds of programs or watching them too much.

If your child's play consists of increased rough-and-tumble activity at home or in the preschool, then she may be watching too much television that portrays fighting. Even some cartoon shows depict combat and aggression as sources of fun and entertainment, and some children will need adult guidance to avoid that kind of message.

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How much television is enough?

One way to think about this question is to ask yourself, What else could he be doing instead of watching television? If it is a time when you are busy and cannot supervise outdoor play or be directly involved in his activity for some reason, or the weather keeps you indoors for extended periods, then perhaps television watching is a reasonable use of his time. If, however, your child could be engaged in creative play (alone or with others), outdoor activity, satisfying physical activity, or helping you with simple but important chores, then it would be appropriate to turn off the television. A child might protest and fuss when the set is first turned off. But if you stay with your decision about what is best, he will accept it eventually.

With whom should preschoolers watch television?

Until you are reasonably confident that the programs your youngster is watching meet with your approval, it is a good idea to watch them with her. At times you can catch messages that may need to be clarified or even contradicted. Like reading stories to children, watching television with them provides a good context for helping them to acquire taste. When parents comment to children about what they appreciate about a story, a landscape, a dance performance, or a rendition of a song, they lay the foundation for the development of aesthetic discrimination. Children may not agree at first and may enjoy different kinds of entertainment from their parents during the teenage years. But chances are they will drift back toward the family values expressed during their very earliest years as consumers of the arts.

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Child-Rearing Disagreements

Lilian G. Katz

It is not surprising that occasionally parents have different ideas about how to raise their child. Child rearing involves constant decisions—big ones and little ones. Should Robin start preschool? Which preschool is best? What kind of cake is best for a birthday party? The old-fashioned idea that Father knows best and therefore should have the last word has given way to greater equality of parents' roles in raising their children, and with it comes greater likelihood of bickering over the many decisions that must be made.

Effect on kids

Research indicates that the rearing of their children is one of the main topics that couples argue about. Furthermore, studies of children's reactions to discord in the household support what many parents have long sensed intuitively: Arguments in the children's presence can be stressful for them. Recent research on infants and preschoolers also indicates that they are very sensitive to adults' moods and show marked distress in the presence of adults' anger. The degree of distress appears to be related to the intensity of adults' feelings.

Arguments in the children's presence can be stressful for them.

Keeping the battles to a minimum

Even though arguments and anger seem to be inevitable aspects of contemporary family life, some steps can be taken to minimize their frequency and their potentially distressing effects on very young children. A first step is to exercise as much restraint as you can so that most of the detailed argument can be played out away from the child.

It might also be wise to set aside some time to determine precisely what the arguments are about. Are there specific issues that set off strong feelings in both parents? Developing a list of the kinds of issues that spark disagreements may help to put them in perspective. Inspection of the list may show that one or both of you are particularly sensitive to an issue that is associated with painful memories from your own childhood, and arguments may be fueled by fear that your child may suffer hurts and disappointments the same way you did. In such cases, take a close and realistic look at your child. Instead of looking for evidence that your child is suffering the way you did, look for evidence that she is

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managing quite well and not feeling the way you did. That should help reduce the intensity of your own reaction so that discussion between the two of you can be conducted more calmly.

Another step is to ask yourself: Is my spouse's position on the issue or behavior in the situation really harmful to our child? Think the question over long enough to consider what you really believe and what evidence you have. In most cases, careful reflection will result in the answer "no." However, if you have given it serious thought and your answer is clearly "Yes, my spouse is harming our child," it seems advisable to discuss the problem with an outside person you trust—minister, pediatrician, or family counselor.

Total agreement isn't necessary

While bitter and acrimonious confrontations between parents can be alarming to a small child, it is really not necessary to pretend to agree with each other on all matters. Such unchanging consensus would rob a child of much that can be learned from observing how adults accommodate to differences in others' views and feelings. Furthermore, a child should not always be faced with a united front; occasionally divided ranks will encourage and stimulate a child's capacity to negotiate, bargain, and present her own case against the opinions of others.

It helps to see resolution

In addition, it is probably useful for young children to observe how adults renegotiate their relationship following a squabble or moments of hostility. These observations can reassure the child that when distance and anger come between her and members of the family, the relationship is not over but can be resumed to be enjoyed again.

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The Only Child

Lilian G. Katz

The "only child" has historically been the object of concern and even scorn in many cultures. It is only common sense, after all, that an only child gets excessive adult attention, perhaps taking on adult ways prematurely. Furthermore, the absence of siblings is also assumed to result in a variety of social deficiencies for "onlies." It is not surprising they are expected to be more self-centered, demanding, dependent, and temperamental than children with siblings.

The fact of the matter

Contrary to popular opinion, the evidence accumulated by many studies does not support any of these stereotypical characteristics of onlies. Several decades of extensive research on onliness and birth order fail to find the expected disadvantages. Most of the research indicates that onlies have no more personality problems than children with siblings and, in fact, actually have many advantages over them.

Only children have no more personality problems than children with siblings.

Indeed, there is no basis at present to be apprehensive about having and raising an only child. On the whole, they appear to have some advantages when it comes to intelligence and school and career achievement. They appear to have as many close friends as other children; they often assume leadership roles and are reported to feel generally happy and satisfied with their lives.

Parents are the determining factor

Specialists studying onlies suggest that the effect of onliness depends upon how parents handle it. If they provide ample opportunities for their child to develop close and strong ties with other children close in age, the child will have the same chances as others to acquire, practice, and refine his social skills.

If too much of only children's time is spent with adults, they may become bored by adult conversations, and consequently become intrusive and demand their parents' undivided attention. The latter could lead to a spoiled quality in the child's behavior. Some onlies who have too much adult and too little peer exposure may become overly adult in their manner and speech and are sometimes teased or rejected by their peers because of it. Regular interaction with other children also minimizes the likelihood of the loneliness that many parents of onlies worry about.

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"Only" concerns

Among the reservations many parents have about onliness is the increased risk that the child will be spoiled by too much attention and by having her demands met too often and too quickly in the absence of competition from a sibling. Such risks are also present in families with two or three or more children, depending upon such factors as the number of years between siblings, the tendency of parents to develop favorites, and the individual differences in perserverance and manipulativeness among the siblings. In other words, onliness in and of itself would not cause a child to be spoiled. Parents can guard against the temptations by acknowledging that it is not in any child's best interests to have her demands and wishes unfailingly fulfilled. Young children are not the best judges of what is in their best interests and they need the judgment of older, wiser, and more experienced people to protect them from their immaturity.

Some only children feel lonely and express strong wishes for a sibling, sometimes envying other families. It is important that parents try not to react to such expressions with feelings of guilt. As it is, many parents of only children already feel guilty because of the fact that in our culture parents who chose to have only one child are considered by some to be selfish.

That's what friends are for

If an only child has frequent visits to and from her friends, and has good times with her parents as well, she is not likely to be missing anything that is essential to healthy growth and development.

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family living

Chores and Children

Lilian G. Katz

The idea that everyone should do his or her share is a basic value for most of us. There are reasons why even preschoolers should be encouraged to pull an appropriate amount of their weight. Participating in the family chores can strengthen a sense of belonging and contributing to the common good. It also lays the foundation for the development of a sense of responsibility to others and minimizes the chances of taking others' efforts and contributions to one's welfare for granted.

Some of the following points may be helpful as you think about getting your preschooler started on the road to being a contributing member of the household.

The real thing

The chores assigned to your preschooler should be genuine ones that have values that are fairly obvious to them. Simple tasks like setting or clearing the dinner table or washing a pet's food dishes are easily understandable to a youngster and the consequences of not doing them are vivid enough to give most of these duties a sense of urgency. Tasks that are phony or cooked up just to keep little hands busy may lead to the child's feeling that he's being treated less than seriously and result in a backlash against participation.

Begin with chores that are done in clear view of an admiring adult.

Give her a job she can do

It is important to try to keep the tasks well adapted to a child's current ability to carry them out reasonably successfully. If your child is not very well coordinated at this particular point, watering the indoor plants may be too problematic and undermine the positive values of accepting this job. If a child is to help with the vacuuming, try to find a room or portion of the rug that has little furniture to navigate, and be prepared to accept a less than perfect performance.

Many parents start by expecting their preschooler to take responsibility for tidying her own playthings or her own room. While this approach seems logical, it may be expecting greater independence than she is ready for. Doing a chore out of sight and reach of others may be just a bit too difficult in the early stages of learning to be a contributing member of the family. It is probably wiser to begin with tasks that are done in clear view of an encouraging and admiring adult, such as setting the breakfast table or putting the clean silverware away.

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After the thrill is gone

Very often young children think chores are fun at first. But as the novelty wears off, it is important to hold them to their obligations. Adults can be sympathetic about the drudgery of it all and can indicate that we all have to do many things that are unpleasant, and that's just how it goes. But keep in mind that sticking to an assignment and seeing it through, even though it is unpleasant, contributes to our self-esteem and to a generally desired view of ourselves as responsible people.

Most parents experience the temptation to say, "It is easier to do it myself!" and let the child opt out of her responsibilities. While in a real sense the statement is probably true, it is not in the best interests of a child's development. It is a good idea to help the child follow through with her responsibility and to make sure she completes expected chores. Even though it is not readily apparent, it is probably the case that youngsters don't really like getting away with neglecting their responsibilities or with fudging. Nevertheless, at first, they may need a lot of help, patience, and support as they build the habit of meeting their obligations.

A job well done is the best reward

Some parents try to get children to clean up their own messiness by offering a reward or bribe. A bribe teaches children that the desired behavior, e.g., cleaning up or fixing a pet's dinner, has no intrinsic value. Chores do have intrinsic worth—they are routine tasks that have to be done for smooth functioning of the household. They are tasks that simply lack intrinsic pleasure!

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"Boys Will Be Boys" and Other Myths

Lilian G. Katz

"Boys will be boys," once a common explanation for multitudes of mischief, is no longer said with confidence. In the last twenty years, hundreds of studies aimed at sorting out which sex differences are inherent at birth from those that are learned have knocked down one myth after another about the behavior and personalities of children of each sex.

Biology or society?

But myths are quite resistant to all the new information available. And it seems that many of the mythical differences between boys and girls are in the eyes of the beholder.

When a group of adults in an experiment were shown a film of a very young child at play, they gave quite different accounts of the child's behavior, depending on whether they were told they were watching a boy or a girl. When adults thought they were watching a boy, they "saw" greater pleasure and less fear in "his" play; these descriptions were reversed when viewers thought they were watching a girl.

Many of the mythical differences between boys and girls are in the eye of the beholder.

Apparently adults in all cultures respond differently to boys and girls from the very moment of birth. So it is not surprising that there are differences in behavior, though they cannot be attributed to powerful sex-linked biological factors. Among the differences that currently are thought to be biologically based are greater verbal aptitude in females and superiority in spatial reasoning in males. But these differences are so small that they do not really merit attention; indeed, recent analyses of studies have cast doubt on these sex differences, too.

Aggression and play

Even aggressiveness, traditionally assumed to be more natural for boys than for girls, has been shown to be more related to the activities and structure of the environment than to the sex of the child. When girls play with trucks, cars, and trains, they do so just as actively and aggressively as boys do. The fact that they play with such male-type toys less often than boys means they display their aggression and activity levels less often.

Accumulated research has revealed the early appearance of clear differences in the activity preferences of the two sexes. Preschool boys, more than girls, tend to play in the part of the preschool or home where

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there is less structure, less adult supervision, and fewer constraints. But when girls do the same, they are just as exploratory, inventive, and active as boys are. In general, girls seem to learn very early to play close by the adult in the setting and to engage in more constrained and conventional activities. This pattern helps explain why girls get more instructions and feedback from teachers than boys do.

Though girls get more instructions from teachers than boys, and their speech is acknowledged more often than boys', boys' appropriate behavior gets more attention than girls'. Research also indicates that boys do not comply with adults as readily as girls do. Thus, when boys' behavior is acceptable, it is readily acknowledged.

So, if there are few biologically-based differences between boys and girls in their personalities and behavior, there are many that can be accounted for by the way parents, teachers, and peers respond to them.

Peer pressure

Several studies have shown that children receive most of their social reactions from their peers of the same sex. Since peers tend to be conservative about sex-appropriate behavior, disapproving noticeably of opposite-sex activity—especially for boys—the peer group is a powerful force in sex-role socialization.

Whether or not to make a big issue over appropriate sex-role behavior—such as playing with sex-typed toys and games—is a matter for each family to decide. However, some long-term consequences may be at stake: girls who are denied opportunities to engage in some of the exploratory, adventurous kinds of play normally preferred by boys may be at a disadvantage later when they are learning math, science, and technological skills, and when making career choices. And boys who are encouraged to engage in activities normally preferred by girls may need adult help and support to cope with teasing and rejection by their same-sex peers.

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Busy, Busy Bees

Lilian G. Katz

Everybody's busy these days! Even the lifestyle of many young children includes a crowded schedule of activities; almost every waking hour is programmed so as not to miss anything. It is natural and appropriate for parents to want their children to take advantage of all potentially valuable experiences and to expose them to the rich variety of activities provided by public libraries, museums, and other community resources.

Many parents are eager to get their preschoolers started on various sports, athletic training, or music lessons, and to get them ready for the next stage of development. Some parents feel pressure from family and neighbors to keep up with others on the amount of enrichment they offer their children, and they feel guilty if theirs are not enrolled in every program available. Others simply subscribe to the view that "the devil finds work for idle hands to do."

How much of your child's time should be scheduled and programmed?

It's important to understand, however, that the amount of scheduled activity children can enjoy varies widely, just as it does for adults. Some children can thrive on a schedule that others find too stressful. Conversely, some youngsters will be thoroughly bored by a lifestyle that others find comfortably low key. The big question is, How much of your child's time should be scheduled and programmed? The points outlined below may help you as you contemplate what might be best for your preschooler.

Signs of stress

The best way to assess whether your youngster's lifestyle is compatible with her temperament, disposition, and stage of development is to observe her for signs of excessive stress. Unusual difficulties in falling asleep, restless nights, loss of appetite, frequent whining, fussiness, and irritability may signal that she is "over-programmed" for the moment. Persistent reluctance to go to the next activity may also indicate that the schedule is more taxing than she can cope with at present and that it should be evaluated.

It helps to drop something from the schedule temporarily and to take a little time to see if she becomes more like herself once the regimen has relaxed a bit. In such cases, it is probably a good idea to indicate to the child that you want her to drop some activity temporarily, until she feels better, and that it will be resumed later. This approach minimizes the chances that she will develop a pattern of dropping out of an activity anytime she wearies of it.

Something tough, something easy

It also may help to keep in mind that neither children nor adults should be working at the upper limit of their capacities all of the time. Throughout the day, we want some of our tasks to be routine and easy, some to be absorbing and interesting, and a few to be challenging. So it is with young children. Fairly regularly, they should be allowed some periods of simple, spontaneous play and time to do nothing in particular.

Variety is the spice of life, but—

Consider also that if children engage in a wide variety of activities, they can acquire breadth of experience, knowledge, and skills, but there may be a trade-off in terms of depth. Young children should have ample opportunities to explore in greater depth what they already know and are familiar with. Depth may limit the breadth of experience, but it has long-term benefits that outweigh the value of breadth.

The "right" proportions

As with most other aspects of growth, development, and learning, whatever is good for children is only good for them in the "right" proportions. More is not necessarily better for them. Children can be overstimulated and overtaxed as well as the opposite. Moderation is a sound approach to many aspects of raising children. The only way to know whether the amount of activity is just right for your individual child is to observe her closely for a few weeks and then to make changes based on what your observations tell you and see if the changes work for her.

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Whose Bed Is It Anyway?

Lilian G. Katz

Almost all children seek the comfort and warmth of their parents' bed at some time during the early years.

The circumstances may vary

Some youngsters just enjoy a cozy snuggle from time to time. Others may want reassurance when life is especially stressful or normal routines are disrupted. Nightmares, thunderstorms, and other frightening events may also cause a child to creep into bed with adults. Suffering during an illness is probably the most common reason for children to express the desire to stay close to Mom and Dad through the night. Whatever the reason, several points should be kept in mind in deciding how to handle this common development in your child's sleeping pattern during the preschool period.

Sleeping alone—many people don't

A young child's sleeping in the parents' bed is unlikely to become a significant problem in and of itself

For many of the world's people, sleeping in crowded, cramped, and noisy conditions with insufficient privacy is a norm they hope to change someday. Most of the world's children do not sleep in isolated interior spaces anything like the individual bedrooms to which we are accustomed. For a young child to sleep alone in a secluded room is not the most "natural" arrangement; it is part of our standard of living and is related to our expectations concerning comfort, sound sleep, and privacy.

Old interpretations: largely exaggerated

Not so long ago, psychologists were quick to put sexual or romantic interpretations upon the child's demand to stay in her parents' bed, and cautioned parents against permitting it. However, today these concerns seem to be greatly exaggerated. As far as we can tell, a young child's sleeping in his or her parents' bed is unlikely to present or become a significant problem in and of itself. If a child seems to be thriving in general, sleeping with his or her parents should not be cause for alarm. It may, however, warrant your concern if it becomes clear that it is a symptom of a larger problem that is making itself apparent in other aspects of the child's behavior.

Factors to consider

One of the major factors to consider in deciding how to handle the matter is the quality of sleep and whether all concerned are getting adequate rest. If the child's

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presence disturbs the adults to a point that sleep, as well as privacy, becomes an issue, then it seems best to stop the behavior before it becomes a firm pattern. Some children resist changes more than others; if your youngster is one of the stubborn ones, it is best to nip in the bud the habit of coming into the parents' bed.

Letting your child join you in bed when her sleep has been broken in the middle of the night may be all right on occasion. However, the practice of letting your child stay up till you and your husband go to bed, then allowing her to join you in bed at that time is likely to be a more difficult pattern to break. It seems better to spend a week or two staying with your child in her room and getting the routine of going to sleep in her own bed firmly established. It is probably best not to lie down in the child's bed alongside her.

Many parents find it helpful to let the child stay in their bed until she falls asleep and then put her back in her own bed. It is a good idea to tell her that you plan to do this so that your wishes and expectations about where she is supposed to sleep are clear and "up-front." If she wakes again and comes back, repeat the process. This may mean some nights of inadequate rest for you. But long-term benefits of getting good sleep routines established for your child will almost certainly make a week or two of hardship worthwhile.

The pleasure of her company

Many parents simply enjoy the company of a child at night. As long as the quality of sleep does not suffer, it is not likely to do any harm to the child. Sooner or later, she will probably want the privacy of her own bedroom anyway.

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ERIC Digest

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Involving Parents in the Education of Their Children

Patricia Clark Brown

When parents are involved in their children's education, both children and parents are likely to benefit. Researchers report that parent participation in their children's schooling frequently:

- enhances children's self-esteem
- improves children's academic achievement
- improves parent-child relationships
- helps parents develop positive attitudes towards school and a better understanding of the schooling process.

Despite these advantages, it is not always easy for parents to find time and energy to become involved or to coordinate with schedules for school events. For some parents, a visit to school is perceived as an uncomfortable experience, perhaps a holdover from their own school days. Others may have their hands full with a job and other children. The availability and cost of babysitters are other factors. Recently, teachers and other school staff have made special efforts to increase communication with parents and encourage involvement in children's learning experiences.

Ways to Involve Parents

One kind of parental involvement is school-based and includes participating in parent-teacher conferences and functions, and receiving and responding to written communications from the teacher. Parents can also serve as school volunteers for the library or lunchroom, or as classroom aides. In one survey, almost all teachers reported talking with children's parents—either in person, by phone, or on open school nights—and sending notices home (Becker & Epstein, 1982). These methods, along with requests for parents to review and sign homework, were most frequently used to involve parents.

Parents can participate in their children's schools by joining Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) or Parent Teacher Organizations (PTOs) and getting involved in decision-making about the educational services their children receive. Almost all schools have a PTA or PTO, but often only a small number of parents are active in these groups.

Another kind of involvement is home-based and focuses on activities that parents can do with their children at home or on the teacher's visits to the child's home. However, few teachers involve parents through home-based activities, partly because of the amount of time involved in developing activities or visiting and partly because of the difficulty of coordinating parents' and teachers' schedules.

Ways to Reach Parents

Some programs aim to reach parents who do not usually participate in their children's education. Such programs provide flexible scheduling for school events and parent-teacher conferences, inform parents about what their children are learning, and help parents create a supportive environment for children's learning at home.

Many schools have responded to the needs of working parents by scheduling conferences in the evening as well as during the day, and by scheduling school events at different times of the day throughout the year.

It is important for teachers to keep the lines of communication open. This involves not only sending regular newsletters and notes, but also obtaining information from parents. Phone calls are a greatly under-used technique for keeping in touch. A teacher usually calls a parent to report a child's inappropriate behavior or academic failure. But teachers can use phone calls to let parents know about positive behavior and to get input. Parents justifiably become defensive if they think that every phone call will bring a bad report. If teachers accustom parents to receiving regular calls just for keeping in touch, it is easier to discuss problems when they occur.

Teachers need to consider families' lifestyles and cultural backgrounds when planning home activities. However, some activities can be adapted to almost any home situation. These are activities that parents or children engage in on a day-to-day basis. Teachers can encourage parents and children to do these activities together, and can focus on the opportunities that the activities provide for learning. For example, although television viewing is a pastime for most children and adults, they do not often watch shows together. Teachers can suggest appropiate programs and send home questions for families to discuss. This discussion can be carried over into class.

Busy parents can include children in such everyday activities as preparing a meal or grocery shopping. Teachers can also suggest that parents set aside a time each day to talk with their children about school. Parents may find this difficult if they have little idea of what occurs in school. Notes on what the children have been working on are helpful. Parents and children can discuss current events using teacher-provided questions. Teachers often suggest the activity of reading aloud to children. Reading to children is an important factor in increasing their interest and ability in reading. Teachers can also encourage children to read to parents. In areas where children may not have many books, schools can lend books, and teachers can provide questions for parents and children to discuss.

Home activities allow parents flexibility in scheduling, provide opportunities for parents and children to spend time together, and offer a relaxed setting. To be most beneficial home activities should be interesting and meaningful—not trivial tasks that parents and children have to "get through." When teachers plan home activities, they often think in terms of worksheets or homework that will reinforce skills learned in school. But parents often grow tired of the endless stream of papers to be checked and the time spent on "busywork." Another danger of promoting home activities is the possibility that there may arise an unclear distinction of roles, with teachers expecting parents to "teach" at home. Teachers and parents need to understand that their roles are different, and that their activities with children should be different.

Difficulties in Involving Parents

All teachers experience the frustration of trying to involve parents and getting little response. Teachers complain that parents do not come to conferences or school open houses, check homework, or answer notes. This leads some teachers to conclude that parents do not care about their children's education. While it is true that the emotional problems of a few parents may be so great as to prevent them from becoming involved with their children's education, most parents do care a great deal. This caring is not, however, always evidenced by parent attendance at school events. There are a number of reasons why these parents may not become involved, and teachers need to consider these before dismissing parents as uninterested.

For many parents, a major impediment to becoming involved is lack of time. Working parents are often unable to attend school events during the day. In addition, evenings are the only time these parents have to spend with their children, and they may choose to spend time with their family rather than attend meetings at school.

For many apparently uninvolved parents school was not a positive experience and they feel inadequate in a school setting. Parents may also feel uneasy if their cultural style or socioeconomic level differ from those of teachers (Greenberg, 1989). Some parents who are uninvolved in school may not understand the importance of parent involvement or may think they do not have the skills to be able to help. Even parents who are confident and willing to help may hesitate to become involved for fear of overstepping their bounds. It is the responsibility of teachers and administrators to encourage such parents to become involved.

Conclusion

The suggestions offered in this digest can help teachers involve parents who might not otherwise be involved. While it is possible for a teacher to implement such a parent involvement program alone, it is much easier if the school as a whole is committed to the program. Administrative staff can relieve some of the burden of implementing a comprehensive parent involvement program, and can offer help and support to teachers.

For More Information

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ERIC Digest

EDO-PS-89-2

Escalating Kindergarten Curriculum

Lorrie A. Shepard and Mary Lee Smith

The practice of kindergarten retention is increasing dramatically. In some districts, as many as 60% of kindergartners are judged to be unready for first grade. These children are provided with alternative programming: developmental kindergarten (followed by regular kindergarten), transition or pre-first grade, or the repeating of kindergarten.

An extra year before first grade is intended to protect unready children from entering too soon into a demanding academic environment where, it is thought, they will almost surely experience failure. The extra year is meant to be a time when immature children can grow and develop learning readiness skills, and children with deficient prereading skills can strengthen them. When parents are asked to agree to retention or transition placement, they are often told that with an extra year to grow, their children will move to the top of their classes and become leaders.

Advocates of kindergarten retention are undoubtedly well-intentioned. They see retention as a way for the school to respond to children's enormous differences in background, developmental stages, and aptitude. They view retention as a means of preventing failure before it occurs.

What Research Says About Retention

The research on kindergarten retention which we conducted from 1984-88 led to three major findings:

1. Kindergarten retention does nothing to boost subsequent academic achievement;
2. Regardless of what the extra year may be called, there is a social stigma for children who attend an extra year;
3. Retention actually fosters inappropriate academic demands in first grade.

We have located 14 controlled studies that document effects of kindergarten retention. Six were included in Gredler's (1984) major review of research on transition rooms, and eight were newly indentified empirical studies. The dominant finding is one of no difference between retained and promoted children. Gredler concluded that at-risk children promoted to first grade performed as well or better than children who spent an extra year in transition rooms. In another study, retained children were matched with promoted children. At the end of first grade, children in the two groups did not differ on standardized math scores or on teacher ratings of reading and math achievement, learner self-concept, social maturity, and attention span (Shepard and Smith, 1985).

Though many retention advocates cite findings that seem to be positive, these studies are often flawed. A major flaw is the absence of a control group. A control group is a critical element in the process of determining differences between children who have been promoted and children who have been retained or placed in transition classes. Studies with control groups consistently show that readiness gains do not persist into the next grade. Children end up at approximately the same percentile rank compared to their new grade peers as they would have had they stayed with their age peers. Furthermore, young and at-risk students who are promoted perform as well in first grade as do retained students.

Tests that are used to determine readiness are not sufficiently accurate to justify extra-year placements. For example, Kaufman and Kaufman (1972) have provided the only reliability data on the widely used Gesell School Readiness Test. They found a standard error of measurement equivalent to six months; in other words, a child who is measured to be at a developmental level of 4 1/2 years, and thus unready for school, could easily be at a development level of 5 years, and fully ready. As many as 30-50% of children will be falsely identified as unready (Shepard & Smith, 1986). Kindergarten teachers are generally unaware of these end results. They know only that retained children do better than they did in their first year of kindergarten. In the short run, teachers see progress: longer attention spans, better compliance with classroom rules, and success with paper and pencil tasks that were a struggle the year before. But these relatively few academic benefits do not usually persist into later grades.

Social Stigma of Retention

Retained children understand that because of something that is wrong with them, they cannot go on with their classmates. Retained children know that they are not making normal progress. They also know the implicit meaning of placement in ability groups such as "the bluebird reading group."

Kindergarten retention is traumatic and disruptive for children. This conclusion is supported by our extensive interviews with parents of retained children. Most parents report significant negative emotional effects associated with retention. Parents' qualitative assessments of their retained children also support our arguments about the social stigma of retention. Kindergarten retention also has a negative consequence over the long run. Children who are too old for their grade are much more likely than their classmates to drop out of school.

The Escalating Kindergarten Curriculum

The fad to flunk kindergartners is the product of inappropriate curriculum. For the last 20 years, there has been a persistent escalation of academic demand on kindergartners and first-graders. In one survey, 85% of elementary principals indicated that academic achievement in kindergarten has medium or high priority in their schools (Educational Research Service, 1986). Many middle-class parents who visit their child's school convey the message that their only criterion for judging a teacher's effectiveness is the teacher's success in advancing their child's reading accomplishments. What was formerly expected for the next grade has been shoved downward into the lower grade. More academics borrowed from the next grade is not necessarily better learning. A dozen national organizations have issued position statements decrying the negative effects of a narrow focus on literacy and mathematical proficiency in the earliest grades (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1988).

Many kindergarten teachers acknowledge that extra-year programs would be unnecessary if children went on to a flexible, child-centered first grade. But educators do not express an awareness that retention may actually contribute to the escalation of curriculum. Teachers naturally adjust what they teach to the level of their students. If many children are older and read, then teachers will not teach as if the room were full of five-year-olds. The subtle adjustment of curricular expectations to the capabilities of an older, faster-moving group is demonstrated in the research literature on school entrance ages (Shepard & Smith, 1988). The victims of inappropriate curriculum are the children judged inadequate by its standards: children who can't stay in the lines and sit still long enough.

Alternatives to Retention

One alternative can be found in schools where teachers and principals are committed to adapting curriculum and instructional practices to a wide range of individual differences. In such schools, a child who is not yet proficient is not failed. The kindergarten teacher begins at the child's level and moves him along to the extent possible. The first-grade teacher picks up where the kindergarten teacher left off. In between-grade arrangements, children move freely across grade boundaries in such activities as cross-age tutoring or student visits to the next grade for three hours a week. The average standardized achievement test scores for third graders in these schools are no different from those of students in high-retaining schools.

Schools with appropriate curriculum and collegial understandings among teachers and principals make retention unnecessary. Once the larger context of curriculum escalation is understood, teachers and principals may have greater incentive to resist the pressures and accountability culture that render more and more children "unready."

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Praise in the Classroom

Randy Hitz and Amy Driscoll

Most educators agree that children need to be in supportive, friendly environments. But recent research indicates that some teacher attempts to create such environments by using praise may actually be counterproductive.

The purpose of this digest is to give teachers new insights into ways to make their statements of praise more effective and consistent with the goals most early childhood educators have for children, namely, to foster self-esteem, autonomy, self-reliance, achievement, and motivation for learning. Most teachers praise students in order to enhance progress toward these goals. However, current research poses the possibility that some common uses of praise may actually have negative effects in some or all of these areas.

Praise: Effects on Self-Esteem and Autonomy

Some praise statements may have the potential to lower students' confidence in themselves. In a study of second graders in science classrooms, Rowe (1974) found that praise lowered students' confidence in their answers and reduced the number of verbal responses they offered. The students exhibited many characteristics indicative of lower self-esteem, such as responding in doubtful tones and showing lack of persistence or desire to keep trying. In addition, students frequently tried to "read" or check the teacher's eyes for signs of approval or disapproval.

In a series of six studies of subjects ranging in age from third grade to adult, Meyer (1979) found that under some conditions, praise led recipients to have low expectations of success at difficult tasks, which in turn decreased the persistence and performance intensity at the task. It seems that certain kinds of praise may set up even the most capable students for failure. No student can always be "good" or "nice" or "smart." In order to avoid negative evaluations, students may tend not to take chances and attempt difficult tasks.

Praise as a Motivator

Many teachers attempt to use praise as a form of positive reinforcement in order to motivate students to achieve and behave in positive ways. However, as Brophy (1981) points out, trying to use praise as a systematic reinforcer in a classroom setting is impractical. Even if teachers were able to praise frequently and systematically, say once every 5 minutes, the average student would still be praised less than once every 2 hours. Brophy's research disclosed the reality that much teacher praise is not deliberate reinforcement, but rather, is elicited by students—the students actually condition the teacher to praise them.

Even if teachers could praise students systematically, there is still some indication that such praise would not be effective. Researchers point out that at best praise is a weak reinforcer. Not all young children are interested in pleasing the teacher, and as children grow older, interest in pleasing the teacher diminishes significantly. Esler (1983) reports that correlations between teachers' rates of praise and students' learning gains are not always positive, and even when correlations are positive, they are usually too low to be considered significant.

Some researchers (Martin, 1977; Stringer and Hurt, 1981) have found that praise can actually lessen self-motivation and cause children to become dependent on rewards. Green and Lepper (1974) found that once teachers began praising preschool children for doing something they were already motivated to do, the children became less motivated to do the activity.

Research demonstrates that various forms of praise can have different kinds of effects on different kinds of students. Students from different socioeconomic classes, ability levels, and genders may not respond in the same way to praise. The use of praise is further complicated by the fact that it may have differential effects depending on the type of achievement being measured. For example, praise may be useful in motivating students to learn by rote, but it may discourage problem solving.

Praise as a Classroom Management Tool

Teachers of young children are especially likely to try to use praise as a way to manage individuals or groups of children. A statement such as "I like the way Johnny is sitting," is often aimed not only at Johnny's behavior but also at nudging children in the group to conform. Teachers of older students would never get away with such control techniques. Even young children who may not be able to articulate their frustration with such blatant manipulation may show their resentment by defiantly refusing to conform or by imitating the "misbehaving" child.

Kounin (1970) did extensive observations in kindergarten classrooms in order to gain insight into effective management practices. He found that smoothness and maintenance of the momentum of classroom instruction and activities were the most powerful variables in controlling deviant behavior and maintaining student attention. Praise did not contribute to effective classroom management.

Praise Versus Encouragement

Research does indicate that there are effective ways to praise students. The terms *effective praise* and *encouragement* are often used by researchers and other professionals to describe the same approach. In this paper, we will refer to both as *encouragement.*

To praise is "to commend the worth of or to express approval or admiration" (Brophy, 1981, p.5). Dreikurs and others (1982) say that praise is usually given to a child when a task or deed is completed or is well done. Encouragement, on the other hand, refers to a positive acknowledgment response that focuses on student efforts or specific attributes of work completed. Unlike praise, encouragement does not place judgment on student work or give information regarding its value or implications of student status. Statements such as "You draw beautifully, Marc," or "Terrific job, Stephanie," are examples of praise. They are nonspecific, place a judgment on the student, and give some indication of the student's status in the group.

Encouragement, on the other hand:

- Offers specific feedback rather than general comments. For example, instead of saying, "Terrific job," teachers can comment on specific behaviors that they wish to acknowledge.
- Is teacher-initiated and private. Privacy increases the potential for an honest exchange of ideas and an opportunity for the student to talk about his or her work.
- Focuses on improvement and efforts rather than evaluation of a finished product.
- Uses sincere, direct comments delivered with a natural voice.
- Does not set students up for failure. Labels such as *nice* or *terrific* set students up for failure because they cannot always be *nice* or *terrific.*
- Helps students develop an appreciation of their behaviors and achievements.
- Avoids competition or comparisons with others.
- Works toward self-satisfaction from a task or product.

Children have an intrinsic desire to learn. Ineffective praise can stifle students' natural curiosity and desire to learn by focusing their attention on extrinsic rewards rather than the intrinsic rewards that come from the task itself (Brophy, 1981). This kind of praise replaces a desire to learn with blind conformity, a mechanical work style, or even open defiance. On the other hand, teachers who encourage students create an environment in which students do not have to fear continuous evaluation, where they can make mistakes and learn from them, and where they do not always need to strive to meet someone else's standard of excellence. Most students thrive in encouraging environments where they receive specific feedback and have the opportunity to evaluate their own behavior and work. Encouragement fosters autonomy, positive self-esteem, a willingness to explore, and acceptance of self and others.

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ERIC Digest

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The Nature of Children's Play

David Fernie

In play, children expand their understanding of themselves and others, their knowledge of the physical world, and their ability to communicate with peers and adults. This digest discusses children's play and its relationship to developmental growth from infancy to middle childhood. The digest also suggests ways in which educators and other adults can support children's play.

Sensorimotor Play

In what Piaget (1962) aptly described as sensorimotor practice play, infants and toddlers experiment with bodily sensation and motor movements, and with objects and people. By 6 months of age, infants have developed simple but consistent action schemes through trial and error and much practice. Infants use action schemes, such as pushing and grasping, to make interesting things happen. An infant will push a ball and make it roll in order to experience the sensation and pleasure of movement.

As children master new motor abilities, simple schemes are coordinated to create more complex play sequences. Older infants will push a ball, crawl after it, and retrieve it. When infants of 9 months are given an array of objects, they apply the same limited actions to all objects and see how they react. By pushing various objects, an infant learns that a ball rolls away, a mobile spins, and a rattle makes noise. At about 12 months, objects bring forth more specific and differentiated actions. At this age, children will throw or kick a ball, but will shake rattles.

In a toddler's second year, there is growing awareness of the functions of objects in the social world. The toddler puts a cup on a saucer and a spoon in her mouth. During the last half of this year, toddlers begin to represent their world symbolically as they transform and invent objects and roles. They may stir an imaginary drink and offer it to someone (Bergen, 1988). Adults initiate and support such play. They may push a baby on a swing or cheer its first awkward steps. Children's responses regulate the adult's actions. If the swing is pushed too high, a child's cries will guide the adult toward a gentler approach. In interactions with adults such as peekaboo, children learn to take turns, act with others, and engage others in play.

Pretend Play

As children develop the ability to represent experience symbolically, pretend play becomes a prominent activity. In this complex type of play, children carry out action plans, take on roles, and transform objects as they express their ideas and feelings about the social world (Garvey, 1984).

Action plans are blueprints for the ways in which actions and events are related and sequenced. Family-related themes in action plans are popular with young children, as are action plans for treating and healing and for averting threats.

Roles are identities children assume in play. Some roles are functional: necessary for a certain theme. For example, taking a trip requires passengers and a driver. Family roles such as mother, father and baby are popular, and are integrated into elaborate play with themes related to familiar home activities. Children also assume stereotyped character roles drawn from the larger culture, such as nurse, and fictional character roles drawn from books and television, such as He-Man. Play related to these roles tends to be more predictable and restricted than play related to direct experiences such as family life (Garvey, 1984).

As sociodramatic play emerges, objects begin to influence the roles children assume. For example, household implements trigger family-related roles and action plans, but capes stimulate superhero play. Perceptually bound younger children may be aided by the provision of realistic objects (Fein, 1981). Even three-year-olds can invent and transform objects to conform to plans.

By the age of four or five, children's ideas about the social world initiate most pretend play. While some pretend play is solitary or shared with adults, preschoolers' pretend or sociodramatic play is often shared with peers in the school or neighborhood. To implement and maintain pretend play episodes, a great deal of shared meaning must be negotiated among children. Play procedures may be talked about explicitly, or signaled subtly in role-appropriate action or dialogue. Players often make rule-like statements to guide behavior ("You have to finish your dinner, baby"). Potential conflicts are negotiated. Though meanings in play often reflect real world behavior, they also incorporate children's interpretations and wishes. The child in a role who orders a steak and piece of candy from a pretend menu is not directly copying anything he has seen before.

Construction play with symbolic themes is also popular with preschoolers, who use blocks and miniature cars and people to create model situations related to their experience.

A kind of play with motion, rough and tumble play, is popular in preschool years. In this play, groups of children run, jump, and wrestle. Action patterns call for these behaviors to be performed at a high pitch. Adults may worry that such play will become aggressive, and they should probably monitor it. Children who participate in this play become skilled in their movements, distinguish between real and feigned aggression, and learn to regulate each other's activity (Garvey, 1984).

Games with Rules

Children become interested in formal games with peers by age five or younger. Older children's more logical and socialized ways of thinking make it possible for them to play games together. Games with rules are the most prominent form of play during middle childhood (Piaget, 1962).

The main organizing element in game play consists of explicit rules which guide children's group behavior. Game play is very organized in comparison to sociodramatic play. Games usually involve two or more sides, competition, and agreed-upon criteria for determining a winner. Children use games flexibly to meet social and intellectual needs. For example, choosing sides may affirm friendship and a pecking order. Games provide children with shared activities and goals. Children often negotiate rules in order to create the game they wish to play (King, 1986). They can learn reasoning strategies and skills from strategy games like checkers. In these games, children must consider at the same time both offensive alternatives and the need for defense. Many card games encourage awareness of mathematics and of the psychology of opponents. Such games can be intellectually motivating parts of pre- and primary school curriculum (Kamii & DeVries, 1980, Kamii, 1985).

The Adult Role in Children's Play

These general guidelines may be helpful:

- *Value children's play and talk to children about their play.* Adults often say "I like the way you're working," but rarely, "I like the way you're playing."
- *Play with children when it is appropriate, especially during the early years.* If adults pay attention to and engage in children's play, children get the message that play is valuable.
- *Create a playful atmosphere.* It is important for adults to provide materials which children can explore and adapt in play.
- *When play appears to be stuck or unproductive, offer a new prop, suggest new roles, or provide new experiences, such as a field trip.*
- *Intervene to ensure safe play.* Even in older children's play, social conflicts often occur when children try to negotiate. Adults can help when children cannot solve these conflicts by themselves (Caldwell, 1977). Adults should identify play which has led to problems for particular children. They should check materials and equipment for safety. Finally, adults should make children aware of any hidden risks in physical challenges they set for themselves.

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ERIC Digest

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Creativity in Young Children

James D. Moran III

The precursors of adult creativity are clearly evident in young children. This digest explores factors that affect creativity in children and techniques for fostering this quality. The need to study creativity, and the definition of creativity within a developmental framework, are also discussed.

Why Study Creativity in Young Children?

Just as all children are not equally intelligent, all children are not equally creative. But just as all children exhibit behaviors which evidence intelligence from birth, they also exhibit behaviors which evidence the potential for creativity.

Creativity is essentially a form of problem-solving. But it is a special type of problem-solving—one that involves problems for which there are no easy answers: that is, problems for which popular or conventional responses do not work. Creativity involves adaptability and flexibility of thought. These are the same types of skills that numerous reports on education (e.g., the Carnegie Report, 1986) have suggested are critical for students.

What Is Creativity?

Creativity has been considered in terms of process, product or person (Barron and Harrington, 1981) and has been defined as the interpersonal and intrapersonal process by means of which original, high quality, and genuinely significant products are developed. In dealing with young children, the focus should be on the process, i.e., developing and generating original ideas, which is seen as the basis of creative potential. When trying to understand this process, it is helpful to consider Guilford's (1956) differentiation between convergent and divergent thought. Problems associated with convergent thought often have one correct solution. But problems associated with divergent thought require the problem-solver to generate many solutions, a few of which will be novel, of high quality, and workable—hence creative.

For a proper understanding of children's creativity, one must distinguish creativity from intelligence and talent. Ward (1974) expressed concern about whether creativity in young children could be differentiated from other cognitive abilities. More recent studies (for example, Moran and others, 1983) have shown that components of creative potential can indeed be distinguished from intelligence. The term "gifted" is often used to imply high intelligence. But Wallach (1970) has argued that intelligence and creativity are independent of each other, and a highly creative child may or may not be highly intelligent.

Creativity goes beyond possession and use of artistic or musical talent. In this context, talent refers to the possession of a high degree of technical skill in a specialized area. Thus an artist may have wonderful technical skills, but may not succeed in evoking the emotional response that makes the viewer feel that a painting, for example, is unique. It is important to keep in mind that creativity is evidenced not only in music, art, or writing, but throughout the curriculum, in science, social studies and other areas.

Most measures of children's creativity have focused on ideational fluency. Ideational fluency tasks require children to generate as many responses as they can to a particular stimulus, as is done in brainstorming. Ideational fluency is generally considered to be a critical feature of the creative process. Children's responses may be either popular or original, with the latter considered evidence of creative potential. Thus when we ask four-year-olds to tell us "all the things they can think of that are red," we find that children not only list wagons, apples and cardinals, but also chicken pox and cold hands.

For young children, the focus of creativity should remain on process: the generation of ideas. Adult acceptance of multiple ideas in a non-evaluative atmosphere will help children generate more ideas or move to the next stage of self-evaluation. As children develop the ability for self-evaluation, issues of quality and the generation of products become more important. The emphasis at this age should be on self-evaluation, for these children are exploring their abilities to generate and evaluate hypotheses, and revise their ideas based on that evaluation. Evaluation by others and criteria for genuinely significant products should be used only with older adolescents or adults.

What Affects the Expression of Creativity?

For young children, a non-evaluative atmosphere appears to be a critical factor in avoiding what Treffinger (1984) labels as the "right answer fixation." Through the socialization process, children move toward conformity during the elementary school years. The percentage of original responses in ideational fluency tasks drops from about 50% among four-year-olds to 25% during elementary school, then returns to 50% among college students (Moran et al., 1983). It is important that children be given the opportunity to express divergent thought and to find more than one route to the solution.

Rewards or incentives for children appear to interfere with the creative process. Although rewards may not affect the number of responses on ideational fluency tasks, they seem to reduce the quality of children's responses and the flexibility of their thought. In other words, rewards reduce children's ability to shift from category to category in their responses (Groves, Sawyers, and Moran, 1987). Indeed, any external constraint seems to reduce this flexibility. Other studies have shown that structured materials, especially when combined with structured instructions, reduce flexibility in four-year-old children (Moran, Sawyers, and Moore, in press). In one case, structured instructions consisted only in the demonstration of how to put together a model. Teachers need to remember that the structure of children's responses is very subtle. Research suggests that children who appear to be creative are often involved in imaginative play, and are motivated by internal factors rather than external factors, such as rewards and incentives.

How Can Adults Encourage Creativity?

- Provide an environment that allows the child to explore and play without undue restraints.
- Adapt to children's ideas rather than trying to structure the child's ideas to fit the adult's.
- Accept unusual ideas from children by suspending judgement of children's divergent problem-solving.
- Use creative problem-solving in all parts of the curriculum. Use the problems that naturally occur in everyday life.
- Allow time for the child to explore all possibilities, moving from popular to more original ideas.
- Emphasize process rather than product.

Conclusion

Adults can encourage creativity by emphasizing the generation and expression of ideas in a non-evaluative framework and by concentrating on both divergent and convergent thinking. Adults can also try to ensure that children have the opportunity and confidence to take risks, challenge assumptions, and see things in a new way.

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ERIC Digest

PS1-1988

Infant Day Care: The Critical Issues

Abbey Griffin and Greta Fein

There is a critical need to increase the availability of quality infant care. If parents, caregivers and policymakers are to understand standards of quality, they must first understand the development of attachment, the effects of early separations, parent characteristics and family circumstances that may contribute to insecurity, and the potential benefits of secure attachment to a caregiver. This digest discusses infant care quality and the debate on infant attachment.

Infant Day Care Today

In March 1970, 24% of mothers with children under 2 years old were in the labor force. By March 1984, the figure was 46.8% (U.S. Dept. of Labor, 1984). Who takes care of the babies while the mothers work? Some infants (25%) are cared for in their own homes. Others (75%) are cared for outside the home by a baby-sitter, or in family day care (group care by an individual in her home). Only 6% of infants under a year old and 12% of those under 2 are cared for in licensed center-based care (U.S. Dept. of Commerce, June 1982). Although state licensing standards apply to center-based and family day care, most family day care programs remain unlicensed. The crisis in day care is such that the choice of care is often determined by cost and availability, rather than quality.

What Do We Know About Quality?

Research on university-based day care models and a growing number of studies on community-based caregiving arrangements (baby-sitters, family day care) are identifying indices of quality care. Phillips and Howes (Phillips, 1987) organize information on infant day care quality into three categories: (1) *structural features* (group size, staff-child ratios, caregiver training, equipment, space); (2) *dynamic aspects* (experiences and interactions); and (3) *contextual features* (staff stability and turnover, type of setting).

Structural Features: The National Day Care Study (Roupp, Travers, Glantz and Coelen, 1979) found that for children under 2, small group size, low staff-infant ratios, and strong caregiver qualifications, predicted positive outcomes. Caregivers with larger groups spent more time in management tasks and restricting behavior, and less time in one-to-one interaction and cognitive-language stimulation. High adult-infant ratios were associated with increased apathy and distress in infants. Caregivers with little child-related formal education engaged in less frequent positive adult-infant interactions and were less likely to have a developmentally appropriate program.

The optimum standards of the Accreditation Criteria of the National Academy of Early Childhood Programs (Bredekamp, 1984) specifies a maximum group size of 8 and a staff-child ratio of 1:4 for infants under 12 months. For infants of 1 to 2 years, maximum group size should be 12, and staff-child ratio 1:4. The lead teacher in an infant center should have a baccalaureate degree in early childhood education or child development.

Dynamic Features: Quality and frequency of adult-child interactions are critical variables in infant care. Children under two rely on and learn from interactions with adults. Adults are the secure base from which infants explore the environment and develop social competence with peers. Adults who talk to infants encourage language development. Adults who respond to infant signals and needs build infants' self-esteem and physical and cognitive abilities (Bredekamp, 1986).

Contextual Features: Studies contrasting types of caregiving are limited in number and report mixed results. Most confirm that staff-child ratios, group size, and caregiver stability define quality in infant care. In each type of care, there is great variability in environment and caregiver qualities. Thus child outcomes depend less on form of care than on characteristics of the setting (Phillips, 1987, Clarke-Stewart and Fein, 1984).

Caregiver stability is of concern because of the high turnover rate: 40% in centers and 60% in family day care and out-of-home babysitting (U.S. Dept. of Labor, 1984). Low salaries and inadequate benefits make it difficult to attract and maintain qualified caregivers. Constant changes of caregiver or caregiving arrangement inhibit benefits of care (Ainslie and Anderson, 1984; Phillips and Howes, 1987).

Effects of Infant Care

Several studies show that day care may benefit low-income children and have benign, if not beneficial, effects on middle-class children. High quality care can prevent the drop in IQ that often occurs between 12 and 30 months in home-reared, low-income children, and enhance their language and problem-solving skills. Greater curiosity, better concentration, and improved on-task behavior have been associated with day care experience in all income groups. Day care children are also seen as being more socially competent and independent (Clarke-Stewart and Fein, 1984; Belsky and Steinberg, 1987).

Research findings on socioemotional development are not unanimous. Several recent studies suggest that development outcomes are related to the infant's experience in a particular caregiving environment (Phillips, 1987). Structural, dynamic, and contextual aspects may determine the infant's quality of life in care, and thus the effects of care. Another concern is age of entry. Some studies indicate that day care children who appear more assertive, less responsive to adults, and more avoidant in reunions with parents, frequently have begun day care before their first birthday.

Infant Care: The Issue of Attachment

Some researchers suggest that for infants under 1, separation from mother for over 20 hours a week may disrupt development of attachment and thus put some children at-risk for social and emotional problems. Daily separations may represent the kind of unavailability that infants experience as maternal rejection. Maternal rejection or unpredictability are associated with insecure attachment in infants. Other researchers argue that these conclusions are premature, the effects reported are weak, and the studies have serious methodological problems. Critics challenge definitions of negative social behaviors (e.g., aggression, which may really be assertiveness) and indicators of insecurity (e.g., avoidance of mother, which may really indicate precocious independence). These positions have been presented in the special infant day care issues of the *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*.

Studies comparing home versus employed mothers do not tell us what factors affect parents' ability to offer infants the kind of environment associated with secure attachment. For example, stress from balancing work and family is particularly evident in single, adolescent, and low-income families (Ainslie, 1984). In one study, families under stress reported that they spent less time researching day care options, needed longer hours, and used poorer quality care (Phillips, 1987). A satisfactory support system may be important for parents and essential to parents experiencing stress. Mothers of insecurely attached infants may have less harmonious marriages and receive less support from spouses and community. Mothers who prefer to work or to stay at home and do so may have more secure infants than those whose work status is at odds with their preference. Work preference is linked to mothers' anxiety about leaving children. Stress and parent anxiety may make separation and adjustment to care difficult. On the other hand, secure attachment to the caregiver may offset damaging effects on the infant. Quality day care can reduce stress by providing a support system for parents and allaying their concerns about their infant (Ainslie, 1984).

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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PS-4-1988

Young Children's Oral Language Development

Celia Genishi

The development of oral language is one of the child's most natural—and impressive—accomplishments. This digest presents an overview of the process and mechanics of language development, along with implications for practice.

When and How Language Is Learned

Almost all children learn the rules of their language at an early age through use, and over time, without formal instruction. Thus one source for learning must be genetic. Humans beings are born to speak; they have an innate gift for figuring out the rules of the language used in their environment. The environment itself is also a significant factor. Children learn the specific variety of language (dialect) that the important people around them speak.

Children do not, however, learn only by imitating those around them. We know that children work through linguistic rules on their own because they use forms that adults never use, such as "I goed there before" or "I see your feets." Children eventually learn the conventional forms, *went* and *feet*, as they sort out for themselves the exceptions to the rules of English syntax. As with learning to walk, learning to talk requires time for development and practice in everyday situations. Constant correction of a child's speech is usually unproductive.

Children seem born not just to speak, but also to interact socially. Even before they use words, they use cries and gestures to convey meaning; they often understand the meanings that others convey. The point of learning language and interacting socially, then, is not to master rules, but to make connections with other people and to make sense of experiences (Wells, 1986). In summary, language occurs through an interaction among genes (which hold innate tendencies to communicate and be sociable), environment, and the child's own thinking abilities.

When children develop abilities is always a difficult question to answer. In general, children say their first words between 12 and 18 months of age. They begin to use complex sentences by the age of 4 to 4 1/2 years. By the time they start kindergarten, children know most of the fundamentals of their language, so that they are able to converse easily with someone who speaks as they do (that is, in their dialect). As with other aspects of development, language acquisition is not predictable. One child may say her first word at 10 months, another at 20 months. One child may use complex sentences at 5 1/2 years, another at 3 years.

Oral Language Components

Oral language, the complex system that relates sounds to meanings, is made up of three components: the phonological, semantic, and syntactic (Lindfors, 1987). The phonological component involves the rules for combining sounds. Speakers of English, for example, know that an English word can end, but not begin, with an *-ng* sound. We are not aware of our knowledge of these rules, but our ability to understand and pronounce English words demonstrates that we do know a vast number of rules.

The semantic component is made up of morphemes, the smallest units of meaning that may be combined with each other to make up words (for example, *paper + s* are the two morphemes that make up *papers*), and sentences (Brown, 1973). A dictionary contains the semantic component of a language, and reflects not just what words make up that language, but also what words (and meanings) are important to the speakers of the language.

The syntactic component consists of the rules that enable us to combine morphemes into sentences. As soon as a child uses two morphemes together, as in "more cracker," she is using a syntactic rule about how morphemes are combined to convey meaning. Like the rules making up the other components, syntactic rules become increasingly complex as the child develops. From combining two morphemes, the child goes on to combine words with suffixes or inflections (*-s* or *-ing*, as in *papers* and *eating*) and eventually creates questions, statements, commands, etc. She also learns to combine two ideas into one complex sentence, as in "I'll share my crackers if you share your juice."

Of course speakers of a language constantly use these three components of language together, usually in social situations. Some language experts would add a fourth component: pragmatics, which deals with rules of language use. Pragmatic rules are part of our communicative competence, our ability to speak appropriately in different situations, for example, in a conversational way at home and in a more formal way at a job interview. Young children need to learn the ways of speaking in the day care center or school where, for example, teachers often ask rhetorical questions. Learning pragmatic rules is as important as learning the rules of the other components of language since people are perceived and judged based on both what they say and how and when they say it.

Nurturing Language Development

Parents and caregivers need to remember that language in the great majority of individuals develops very efficiently. Adults should try not to focus on "problems," such as the inability to pronounce words as adults do (for example, when children pronounce r's like w's). Most children naturally outgrow such things, which are a tiny segment of the child's total repertoire of language. However, if a child appears not to hear what others say to her; if family members and those closest to her find her difficult to understand; or if she is noticeably different in her communicative abilities from those in her age range, adults may want to seek advice from specialists in children's speech, language and hearing.

Teachers can help sustain natural language development by providing environments full of language development opportunities. Here are some general guidelines for teachers, parents, and other caregivers:

Understand that every child's language or dialect is worthy of respect as a valid system for communication. It reflects the identities, values, and experiences of the child's family and community.

Treat children as if they are conversationalists, even if they are not yet talking. Children learn very early about how conversations work (taking turns, looking attentively, using facial expressions, etc.) as long as they have experiences with conversing adults.

Encourage interaction among children. Peer learning is an important part of language development, especially in mixed-age groups. Activities involving a wide range of materials should promote talk. There should be a balance between individual activities and those that nurture collaboration and discussion, such as dramatic play, block-building, book-sharing, or carpentry.

Remember that parents, caregivers, teachers, and guardians are the chief resources in language development. Children learn much from each other, but adults are the main conversationalists, questioners, listeners, responders, and sustainers of language development and growth in the child-care center or classroom.

Continue to encourage interaction as children come to understand written language. Children in the primary grades can keep developing oral abilities and skills by consulting with each other, raising questions, and providing information in varied situations. Every area of the curriculum is enhanced through language, so that classrooms full of active learners are hardly ever silent.

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Employer-Supported Day Care

ERIC DOCUMENTS

ED 305171
American Association of Health Care Consultants, Fairfax, VA. **Hospital-Sponsored Child Care: A 1988 National Survey.** (1989). 28 p.
A total of 965 U.S. hospitals were surveyed for the purpose of obtaining information on current and projected provision of child care services to employees and their communities. Other survey questions concerned hospitals' views of the costs and benefits of offering child care services, and appropriate governmental policies on employer-supported child care. Of the hospitals, 38% provided some form of child care assistance to employees. It was estimated that by the end of 1989, 75% of U.S. hospitals would have some form of child care.

ED 305143
Reisman, Barbara; and others. **Child Care: The Bottom Line. An Economic and Child Care Policy Paper.** (1988) 85 p.
The Child Care Action Campaign commissioned research from nine leading economists and policy analysts for the purpose of focusing attention on the link between economic well-being and child care. This report provides a synthesis of the economic research presented and the policy discussions held at the group's conference. Included are recommendations for employers and discussions of the relation between child care and the nation's economy. A brief description of the nature of corporate involvement in child care is appended.

ED 303 251
Delaney, Mary and Gloria Komori.
Care and Resources for Employees and Their Dependents. (1988). 56p.
Aided by the Boys and Girls Club of Escondido, CARE Boosters developed an employer-sponsored dependent family day care system for children and developmentally disabled individuals. The project showed the feasibility of employers providing employees with the fringe benefit of dependent care. Issues discussed include the responsibilities of the family day care provider, the organization of the CARE Boosters Network, and other useful information for establishing a similar program.

ED 302 339
Lombardo, Kathy A.
Facilitating Employee Recruitment and Retention Through On-Site Child Day Care. (1988). 52p. Ed.D. Practicum, Nova University.
In order to improve employee recruitment and retention, an early childhood educator at a community hospital implemented a licensed on-site child care program. A parent questionnaire assessed the influence of child care availability on employee decisions about beginning, resuming, or retaining employment. After the child care center was established, objectives concerning employee recruitment and retention were met or exceeded.

ED 299023
Governor's Task Force on Day Care. Final Report. (1987) 52 p.
In December, 1986, the Governor of Illinois appointed a task force to make recommendations on ways in which each sector of society could help narrow the gap between the availability of day care services and the child care needs of working parents. One work group focused on employer support for child care, while others concentrated on issues related to quality care and under-served populations. The report summarizes the recommendations of each work group.

ED 295 732
Corporate Child Care Options. A Position Paper by Catalyst. RR#1. (1987). 10p.
This report presents four general ways for organizations to assist their employees in locating child care: by offering financial aid (either directly or through benefit packages); by adjusting employee work schedules and leaves of absence; by operating a child care facility; or by maintaining a child care information center.

ED 289 623
Child Care in Federal Buildings: Twenty-First Report by the Committee on Government Operations, House of Representatives, 100th Congress, 1st Session. Congress of the U.S., House Committee on Government Operations. Washington, D.C. October 2, 1987. 23p. Report No. 100-333. 23p.

Although the General Services Administration (GSA) officially encourages the establishment of child care centers in federal buildings, and although sites are available at free or reduced rent, at the time of this report, only ten such centers existed. This report investigates the situation and recommends corrective actions.

ED 289 617
Taylor, Glen.
Taylor Proposes Five-Year Child Care Program. (1987). 9p. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Minnesota Council on Family Relations.
Senator Glen Taylor of Minnesota proposed a five-year child care program to encourage employer-sponsored child care and increase by 53,000 the enrollment of low-income children. Central features of the program include: (1) providing tax incentives for employers who build child care facilities or establish child care programs near work sites; (2) establishing a child care office in state government; (3) encouraging accreditation of child care programs; and (4) guaranteeing fully funded child care for children from particularly disadvantaged backgrounds. Also discussed are national and Minnesotan family and child care trends.

ED 281 656
Bergman, Roberta L. and Martha E. Metarelis.
Developing an Employer-Assisted Family Day Home System: A Guidebook. (1987). 168p.
Both this guidebook and the Employer-Assisted Home-Based Child Care Delivery System were developed by Child Care Dallas as a model for employers who wish to help their employees locate high quality, affordable infant and toddler child care. Advice is provided for meeting the managerial, organizational, financial, staff development and public relations challenges involved in establishing and maintaining a family day home system. A brief discussion of related issues, additional recommendations, and a selection of planning materials conclude the document.

JOURNAL ARTICLES

Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues. **"Results of the Child Care Challenge on Employer-Sponsored Child Care Services."** *Young Children*, vol. 43 no. 6 (1988): 60-62.
This article reports results of the Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues Child Care Challenge on employer-sponsored child care services. The caucus discussed efforts of the business community to rectify the inadequate supply of affordable, high quality child care services.

Hayghe, Howard V. **"Employers and Child Care: What Roles Do They Play?"** *Monthly Labor Review*, vol. 111 no. 9 (1988): 38-44.
A nationwide survey of approximately 10,000 businesses and government agencies conducted in 1987 by the Bureau of Labor Statistics revealed that about 2% of employers sponsored day care centers and 3% provided financial assistance for child care expenses. Other forms of assistance that employers provide for working parents are discussed.

Polito, Josephine Tutino. **"Current Trends in Employer-Supported Child Care."** *Early Child Development and Care*, vol. 46 (1989): 39-56.
The increased employment of mothers with young children has heightened employee conflicts between work and family responsibilities. This article describes efforts by employees nationwide to support employee child care, and offers information for administrative, educational and public policy decision makers.

Watkins, Karen E. **"Supporting Women's Reentry to the Workplace."** *New Directions for Continuing Education*, no. 39 (1988): 49-64.
This article describes supportive work structures and benefit programs which make it more feasible for women to combine work and family. Such structures and programs are slowly being adopted in the workplace.

Compiled by Rachel Friedlander Tickner.

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At-Risk Children and School Success

ERIC DOCUMENTS

ED 300 923
Levin, Henry M.
Structuring Schools for Greater Effectiveness with Educationally Disadvantaged or At-Risk Students. (1989). 30p.
This paper addresses school structure and management issues involved in meeting educational needs of at-risk students. It analyzes the effectiveness of the accelerated schools model developed by Stanford University researchers to accelerate the academic progress of disadvantaged learners. The paper considers disadvantages that school districts face in the absence of such a model, and suggests ways for administrators and policymakers to shift organizational decisions from the district to the school. Advantages associated with this arrangement are listed.

ED 297 073
Casanova, Ursula. **Conflicting Views of "At-Risk" Students**. (1988.) 16p.
The cases of 12 students in second and third grade who had been identified as "at-risk" by their teachers were examined. It was found that: (1) discrepancies existed between parents' and school personnel's perceptions of the child; (2) information was often not solicited from parents by school personnel; (3) school personnel's perceptions were more important than parents' in making decisions about the child's school career; (4) information was sometimes withheld from parents by school personnel; (5) parents seemed to accept the judgments of school personnel and set aside their own doubts; and (6) class size may prevent the development of strong home-school relationships based on collaboration.

ED 295 757
Rachal, Janella and Garbo, Diane. **A Three-Year Longitudinal Study of the Sustained Effects of Early Childhood Education on the Kindergarten and First Grade Performance of Former Program Participants**. (1988). 24p.
The impact of Louisiana's Early Childhood Development Program for children at risk of being unprepared for school was examined in this study. Teachers' assessments of children enrolled in kindergarten and first and second grade were obtained with a measure that identified seven areas basic to early childhood development. Teachers were asked to assess the performance of program graduates relative to that of their present classmates. Results showed that 93.6% of program graduates were enrolled at the normal grade level. The performance of participating students was rated by teachers as mainly in line with that of nonparticipating peers in all three grades. The majority of program participants were at the developmental level of peers, and some were above class average.

ED 292 579
Helmich, Edith. **Prekindergarten Programs for 3 and 4 Year Old Children at Risk of Academic Failure: 1986-87 School Year**. (1988). 10p.
This document summarizes information on the second year of operation of 93 projects participating in the State of Illinois prekindergarten educational grant program for children at-risk due to environmental deficits. Contents provide: (1) background information on the legislation establishing the program, programs evaluation schedules, and a two-year program summary; (2) introductory material describing data collection efforts during the 1986-87 school year; (3) a discussion of program characteristics; and (4) follow-up information on prekindergarten participants enrolled in kindergarten during 1986-87.

ED 291 835
Karweit, Nancy. **Effective Kindergarten Programs and Practices for Students at Risk. Report No. 21**. (1987). 49p.
This evaluation report examines research on kindergarten programs and practices for children who are at risk of school failure. Programs which present evidence of positive effects and can be replicated at other sites are discussed. Three approaches to addressing the needs of at-risk children are considered: (1) repetition of the kindergarten program, (2) extension of the kindergarten day, and (3) delivery of a specialized curriculum.

ED 290 574
Phlegar, Janet M. **Good Beginnings for Young Children: Early Identification of High-Risk Youth and Programs that Promote Success**. (1987). 22p.
This packet provides an overview of some of the issues concerning the early identification and treatment of young children at risk of failing in school, and profiles 16 model programs for students from prekindergarten to third grade. Contents emphasize approaches that begin early and involve parents. Programs described are those that have demonstrated progress with youth of diverse cultural backgrounds or limited English-speaking skills.

ED 288 922
Slavin, Robert E. and Madden, Nancy A. **Effective Classroom Programs for Students At Risk**. (1987.) 49p.
This paper examines research on classroom programs for elementary school students who are at risk for learning problems. The goal of the study is to determine how the education needs of all students can be met by fundamentally restructuring the regular classroom. The review focuses on comprehensive programs that benefit at-risk students and are replicable at most schools. Research demonstrates that effective classroom programs accommodate instruction to individual needs while maximizing direct instruction, and assess student progress frequently through a structured hierarchy of skills. Two categories of programs were particularly effective: continuous progress and cooperative learning.

ED 286 597
Kendall, Robbie M. **Early Childhood Intervention for Economically Disadvantaged Children: The Parent-Infant Project**. (1987). 19p.
The Parent-Infant Project was established to investigate effects of early intervention programs for infants and toddlers who are at risk for special education services due to developmental delays. The purposes of the project were to (1) identify conditions in families that might contribute to the child's at-risk status and (2) work with parents in the home in order to help parents provide experiences which will lead to their children's optimal development. Preliminary findings of research into program effects revealed that 83% of the economically disadvantaged infants referred for an evaluation demonstrated developmental delays of 6 months or more in one or more of the developmental skill areas.

ED 284 173
Sanacore, Joseph. **Family Trends and the Need for Cross-Cultural Reading Interventions**. (1987). 12p.
Cross-cultural reading instruction practices and programs can provide insights that prevent failure for children at-risk. In Denmark's Reading Maintenance Program, teachers focus on reading aloud, copying passages, and discussing miscues or errors. In New Zealand's Reading Recovery Program for first graders, teachers focus on teacher modeling of fluent reading, and students read easy books to develop their fluency. In the United Kingdom's Paired Reading, adults model difficult words until children can read them alone. Such reading programs require extra funding, but save money in remedial programs in the long run.

JOURNAL ARTICLES

Fitzgerald, Mary Trabue and Karnes, Dianne E. **"A Parent-Implemented Language Model for At-Risk and Developmentally Delayed Preschool Children."** *Topics In Language Disorders*, vol. 7 no. 3 (June 1987): 31-46.
The Regional Intervention Program (RIP) for Parents and Preschools encourages parent participation. Parents serve as language trainers for other parents, language interventionists in the classroom, collectors of assessment data, and communicative interactants with their children.

Pellicano, Roy R. **"At Risk: A View of *Social Advantage*."** *Educational Leadership*, vol. 44 no. 6 (March 1987): 47-49.
School systems must reexamine the value structure of schools and determine whether it is still valid in light of the needs of at-risk students. Curriculum developers need to be aware of socioeconomic class variables and develop school environments that enhance achievement for all students.

Weitz, Judith H. **"America's Children: Growing Up At Risk."** *State Government News*, vol. 30 no. 1 (May 1987): 8-9, 26.
One out of five people under the age of 18 lives in a family with poverty level income, making the young the poorest age group in the country. Federal assistance is necessary to change the situation. Reasons for children's poverty, and their minimum needs for a healthy upbringing, are covered.

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SO	Journal title, volume, issue, number, date, pages (CIJE only)
LG	Language
GS	Geographic source (RIE only)
SN	Sponsoring agency name and code (RIE only)
PA	Program area code (RIE only)
IS	RIE or CIJE issue number
NO	Numbers: grant, contract report, project (RIE only)
CH	Clearinghouse code
GV	Government status (RIE only)
PR	EDRS price codes (RIE only) RIE not available PR=NA
PT	Publication type code (RIE only)
AV	Availability statement
LV	Level of availability (RIE only)
NT	Descriptive notes
YR	Year of publication or generated entry date
MJ	Major subject descriptors
MN	Minor subject descriptors
ID	Identifiers
AB	Abstract

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  1    ED303789 ED302846 ED304236 ED302979 ED300120 ED286651
   RESULT          6

  2    ED298396 ED301332 ED292565 ED296800 ED303254 ED300145
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  3    ED300492 ED281665 ED300123 ED286615 ED293622 ED301333
   RESULT          6

  4    ED286616 ED281661 ED304234 ED286655 ED301334
   RESULT          5

  5     1 2 3 4
   RESULT          23

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AN ED304236.
AU Seppanen, Patricia S.; And Others.
TI Community Education as a Home for Family Support and Education
   Programs.
PR EDRS Price - MF01/PC12 Plus Postage.
NT 290p.
YR 88.
DE Community-Coordination. Community-Education.
   Educational-Cooperation. Family-Programs. Parent-Education.
DE Early-Childhood-Education. Feasibility-Studies. Field-Studies.
   Profiles. Public-Schools. School-Role. Surveys. Young-Children.
ID IDENTIFIERS: Early Childhood Family Education. Minnesota.
AB This report explores ways in which family support and education
   programs targeted to families with preschool-age children fit within
   schools, or more specifically, within local community education
   programs. The issue was examined by means of: (1) an in-depth field
   study of the Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) initiative at 9
   local sites in Minnesota; and (2) a survey of 12 family support and
   education programs in other states. Both methods of research
   addressed the issue of community education as the context for family
   support and education programs, and examined the benefits of such
   arrangements and the feasibility of more widespread use of the
   arrangements. An introduction in Chapter I is followed in Chapter II
   by a summary of the current scope and operation of ECFE in Minnesota
   and a consideration of factors of design, context, and management
   that affect local program implementation. Chapter III describes the
   benefits of basing the ECFE initiative within community education and
   assesses the degree to which findings in Minnesota may be generalized
   to local community education-based family support and education
   programs across the U.S. Conclusions are advanced in Chapter IV.
   Individual profiles of the 21 local sites studied are included in
   appendices, as are tables, figures, and other materials.
   Approximately 50 references are cited. (RH)

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AN ED304234.
AU Ziegler, Suzanne.
TI The Effects of Parent Involvement on Children's Achievement: The
   Significance of Home/School Links.
PR EDRS Price - MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
NT 72p.
YR 87.
DE Academic-Achievement. Family-School-Relationship.
   Parent-Participation. Students.
DE Elementary-Secondary-Education. Foreign-Countries. Guidelines.
   Literature-Reviews. Preschool-Education.
ID IDENTIFIERS: Ontario (Toronto).   TARGET AUDIENCE: Parents.
   Teachers. Administrators. Practitioners.
AB Aspects of communication between home and school are discussed in
   four chapters. Introductory remarks point out two very important
   messages in the research on the effects of parental involvement. The
   first is that the gap between working class and middle-class children
   in school achievement is explained, in substantial part, by certain
   differing patterns of child-parent and parent-school interaction. A
   second and even more important message is that school personnel can
   intervene positively and efficiently to teach most parents to be as
   effective as some parents already are. Chapter I focuses on parental
   involvement with children at home at the preschool, primary, junior,
   intermediate, and senior levels. Chapter II concerns parental
   involvement at school. Chapter III discusses the whys and hows of
   connecting parents and schools. Chapter IV deals with overcoming
   barriers and getting commitment in parent-teacher partnerships. A
   bibliography is included. (RH).

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AN ED303789.
AU Roser, Nancy L.
TI Helping Your Child Become a Reader.
PR EDRS Price - MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
AV Parent Booklets, International Reading Association, 800 Barksdale
   Rd., PO Box 8139, Newark, DE 19714-8139 (No. 161, $1.75 prepaid);
   ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills, 2805 E. 10th
   St., Bloomington, IN 47408 ($1.75 prepaid).
NT 21p.
YR 89.
DE Early-Reading. Parent-Participation. Parent-Student-Relationship.
   Reading-Aloud-to-Others. Reading-Material-Selection.
DE Beginning-Reading. Library-Role. Oral-Reading.
   Parent-School-Relationship. Primary-Education. Television.
ID IDENTIFIERS: Beginning Writing.   TARGET AUDIENCE: Parents.
AB This booklet presents specific suggestions, based on research, to
   help parents encourage their children to become readers. Suggestions
   for reading to children include: (1) continuing to read to children
   once they learn to read; (2) reading to children regularly; (3)
   talking about what is read; (4) sharing reading; (5) starting slowly;
   and (6) selecting books wisely. Other suggestions to parents for
   encouraging children to read include making sure children have books
   of their own, talking with and listening to children, giving children
   the opportunity to write, adult modeling of reading, using television
   wisely, using the library, and becoming involved at school. (RS)
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AN ED303254.
AU Winter, Mildred M.
TI Parents as Teachers: Beginning at the Beginning.
PR EDRS Price - MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
NT 5p. ; Paper presented at the National Conference on Early Childhood Issues: Policy Options in Support of Children and Families (Washington, DC, November 17-18, 1988).
YR 88.
DE Information-Dissemination. Parent-Education. Parent-Participation. Program-Development.
DE Academic-Achievement. Government-Role. Infants. Prevention. State-Government. State-Programs. Toddlers. Underachievement.
ID IDENTIFIERS: Missouri. Parents as Teachers. Program Replication.
AB Missouri's Parents as Teachers (PAT) program is a state-funded nontargeted early prevention service that is provided by all 543 school districts in the state. Professional educators involved in the program provide parents with the tools they need to effectively teach and nurture their young children. The PAT curriculum was designed to strengthen the foundations of later learning, language and intellectual development, curiosity, and social skills. In 1985, when pilot project participants who were 3 years old were compared with a matched comparison group, results confirmed the benefits of the program to children and their parents. Based on the success of the pilot project, the PAT program has grown significantly with support of state and local funding. Since 1985, professional staff from the pilot project have trained and credentialed 1,500 parent educators to provide PAT services. Statewide expansion has challenged the program to demonstrate its effectiveness in the inner cities, in migrant communities, and with the rural poor throughout the state. Mounting national and international interest in the program suggests that others agree that the best way to improve elementary education is to strengthen parents' role as their children's first teachers. (RH).

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AN ED302979.
AU Hedge, Russell E.; Johnson, Willard L.
TI Training Parents of Developmentally Delayed Children in Rural Areas.
PR EDRS Price - MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
NT 35p.
YR 88.
DE Delivery-Systems. Developmental-Disabilities. Parent-Education. Program-Effectiveness. Rural-Environment.
DE Community-Services. Cost-Effectiveness. History. Infants. Parenting-Skills. Preschool-Education. Respite-Care. Rural-Family. Young-Children.
ID IDENTIFIERS: Early Intervention. Education of the Handicapped Act Amendments 1986.
AB The report describes the program philosophy and accomplishments over the past decade of the Infant and Early Childhood Intervention Program (IECIP) of the Kansas University Affiliated Program (KUAP) at Parsons, Kansas, which has focused solely on delivering information and training to parents of developmentally delayed children. Topics discussed include the demographics of rural Southeast Kansas, the history of IECIP, basic premises for working with parents, program approach, practical approaches to parent training, and a description of IECIP services and support programs, including a respite care program. The IECIP program is compared with other programs along such parameters as personnel, services, acceptance criteria, cost per client, frequency and length of visits, and degree of program structure. The report concludes with a position statement which holds that early intervention and special education teachers and therapists who provide direct services to children simply cannot achieve the success that parents themselves can achieve in training developmentally delayed children. Furthermore, the report criticizes the proliferation of traditional, center-based preschools in response to the recent passage of Public Law 99-457, the Education of the Handicapped Act Amendments (1986) noting that the same systems now observed to be failing older developmentally delayed students will soon be implemented for children birth to 3 years of age. (JW).

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AN ED302846.
AU Baghban, Marcia.
TI You Can Help Your Young Child with Writing.
PR EDRS Price - MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
AV Parent Booklets, International Reading Association, 800 Barksdale Rd., PO Box 8139, Newark, DE 19714-8139 (No. 160, $1.75 prepaid).
NT 17p.
YR 89.
DE Parent-Child-Relationship. Writing-Readiness.
DE Early-Experience. Reading-Aloud-to-Others. Spelling. Story-Telling. Young-Children.
ID IDENTIFIERS: Beginning Writing. Childrens Writing. Error Correction (Language). Writing Models. TARGET AUDIENCE: Parents.
AB Part of a series designed to provide practical ideas parents can use to help children become readers, this booklet focuses on how to encourage young children to write. The booklet describes the kinds of writing that children do, offers suggestions on how to encourage children to experiment with spelling, and urges parents not to be overly concerned with the correctness of their young child's writing. The booklet provides specific activities for parents, such as (1) practicing writing; (2) providing the child with easy access to writing materials; (3) celebrating children's authorship; (4) valuing their writing; (5) reading to the child; (6) encouraging a child's storytelling; and (7) encouraging children's teachers to incorporate writing as part of the daily curriculum. A list of 11 recommended books and articles and a list of resources available from the International Reading Association are appended. (RS).

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AN ED301334.
AU Botting, Karen.
TI The Early Years: A Parent's Companion.
PR EDRS Price - MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
NT 40p.
YR 86.
DE Educational-Experience. Elementary-School-Students. Home-Study. Individual-Development. Parent-Teacher-Cooperation.

DE Educational-Resources. Foreign-Countries. Parent-Role.
Primary-Education.
ID IDENTIFIERS: Manitoba.
AB The purpose of this handbook for Manitoba's parents is to encourage the sharing of ideas between school and home when children are in kindergarten through fourth grade. Topics addressed include: (1) ways in which children develop socially, emotionally, physically, intellectually, and creatively, and the importance of play in development; (2) aspects of the child's day at school, particularly language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, health, physical education, creative arts, computer education, integrated learning activities, learning centers, field trips, and immersion and heritage language programs; (3) things that children can do at home that will help them acquire language and mathematics skills, find self-expression in drama and music, watch television intelligently, and be safe; (4) answers for questions about child's education that parents frequently ask; and (5) general, print, audio, and environmental resources available to parents in Manitoba. (RH).

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AN ED301333.
AU Honig, Alice Sterling.
TI Talk, Read, Joke, Make Friends: Language Power for Children.
PR EDRS Price - MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
NT 9p. ; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (Anaheim, CA, November 10-13, 1988).
YR 88.
DE Child-Caregivers. Communication-Skills. Language-Acquisition.
Preschool-Children. Teacher-Role. Teaching-Methods.
DE Guidelines. Preschool-Education.
ID TARGET AUDIENCE: Teachers. Practitioners.
AB Offered are 20 tips that caregivers can use to help young children discover the pleasures and powers of language. Tips include: tie words to actions; use language that matches the child's stage of development; use specific encouragement; help children think in sequences; teach time and space words, as well as polar opposites and relational terms; use open-ended questions; activate children's listening skills; keep talk and attitudes toward language positive, and use humor; describe and label; help children see the relationship between written and oral language; help children create stories; engage children in dramatic play games; discuss feelings with children; help children reason and use cause and effect words; use incongruity and make obvious mistakes to encourage children to explain; read to children in groups and individually; use music, chants, rhythms, and finger plays; and listen to children while encouraging them to communicate verbally. Caregivers are reminded that children need communicative adults in order to develop rich and complex communication skills. (RH).

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AN ED301332.
AU Johnson, Helen W. Ginger.
TI Using Children's Literature To Motivate Teen Parents To Read to Their Children.
PR EDRS Price - MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
NT 16p. ; Paper presented at the Family Resource Coalition Conference (Chicago, IL, October 6-9, 1988). Funding for this project was made possible by a grant from the Hasbro Children's Foundation.
YR 88.
DE Childrens-Literature. Creative-Writing. Early-Parenthood.
English-Curriculum. Parent-Education. Reading-Aloud-to-Others.
DE Art-Activities. Course-Content. Cultural-Activities.
Literature-Reviews. Parent-Child-Relationship. Picture-Books.
Reading-Materials. Young-Children.
AB This guide describes the curriculum for the Children's Literature Course at the New Futures School, a high school for pregnant and parenting teens. In addition to teaching the students about good literature which is written for children, one of the main objectives of the course is to convince teen parents of the importance of reading aloud to their children. Each week students read 10 children's books and write a critical review for each book. They also read children's magazines and report on different magazine features. Reviews of magazine articles written about reading aloud to children are discussed in class. Teen parents learn to do crafts with young children and take field trips of interest to young children. At the beginning of each semester, a self-awareness exercise is shared with class members; for example, a student might asssemble a personality quilt square, a collage, or a coat-of-arms. Students create two children's books during the semester by following course guidelines for creating picture books, zip-lock baggy books, cloth or texture books, or peek-a-boo books. Book-making guidelines and instructions for some crafts are provided in the report, as is a brief comparison of the cooking process and the writing process. (RJC).

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AN ED300492.
AU Braden, William; And Others.
TI The Critical Years: City Kids Left Behind at the Start.
PR EDRS Price - MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
NT 14p. ; Reprint of a five-part series that appeared June 26 through June 30, 1988.
YR 88.
DE Childhood-Needs. Early-Childhood-Education.
Economically-Disadvantaged. Kindergarten-Children.
Minority-Group-Children. Urban-Schools.
DE Black-Students. Elementary-School-Curriculum.
Elementary-School-Students. Gifted. Hispanic-Americans.
Kindergarten. Latchkey-Children. Parent-Child-Relationship.
Parenting-Skills. Parent-Participation. Preschool-Children.
Preschool-Curriculum. Primary-Education. Public-Schools.
Suburban-Schools. White-Students.
ID IDENTIFIERS: Chicago Public Schools IL. Hispanic American Students.
Illinois (Chicago). TARGET AUDIENCE: Community.
AB This report examines preschool and early primary education in the Chicago (Illinois) public schools, and its impact on disadvantaged minority children. Statistical data were gathered by a survey of 196 kindergarten teachers. For comparison, the survey was also sent to kindergarten teachers in Wilmette (Illinois), a Chicago suburb. Part 1, "City Kids Behind at the Start," compares the entry-level skills

of kindergarten students in the city schools with those in the suburbs. Part 2, "Preschool Can Benefit Low-Income Children," discusses the advantages of preschool programs for low-income minority children, criticizes a proposed state spending plan for preschool programs, and examines a proposal for combining preschool and day care facilities. Part 3, "The Play's the Thing in Kindergarten," reviews preschool and primary basic skills curricula and learning activities, and discusses the negative effects of summer vacation on disadvantaged students. Part 4, "How Parents Are Failing to Prepare Kids," examines the parents' role in helping their children to learn, and parenting skills. Part 5, "'Invisible' Gifted Lost Forever," discusses the need for programs for gifted minority students. Statistical data are included on seven graphs and charts. (FMW).

AN ED300145.
AU Cudaback, Dorothea; Dickinson, Nancy.
TI Parent Education by Mail: A Cost Effective Way To Help Parents at Risk.
PR EDRS Price - MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
NT 21p.; Paper presented at the International Conference on Social Welfare (24th, Berlin, East Germany, August 4, 1988).
YR 88.
DE Delivery-Systems. Information-Dissemination. Parent-Attitudes. Parent-Education. Prevention. Program-Effectiveness.
DE High-Risk-Persons.
ID IDENTIFIERS: Prevention by Mail Programs. Primary Prevention.
AB For a primary prevention program to succeed, it should: (1) address a significant individual or social problem; (2) be designed for, and delivered to, the individuals or groups most likely to be at-risk of experiencing the problem; (3) provide the kind of information or service desired by this target audience; (4) be sufficiently cost-effective and practical so that it can be delivered to a fairly large audience; and, most importantly, (5) acheive its objectives with a significant proportion of those to whom it is delivered. The programs discussed in this paper appear to meet these criteria. Described in terms of their purpose and scope are two researched, prevention-by-mail programs designed to determine the effects of age-paced parent education booklets on those who read them. The first study considered is a survey of parents in 10 states who received a series of booklets designed to help parents enhance their parenting skills and improve their knowledge of infant development. The second study is an evaluation of a California age-paced parent education series, "Parent Express," designed for teenage and low-income parents. In the conclusion, implications for social work are briefly discussed. (RH).

AN ED300123.
AU Turner, Pauline H.; Zigler, Edward.
TI Parents and Day Care: The Search for an Alliance.
PR EDRS Price - MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
NT 40p.
YR 87.

DE Child-Care-Givers. Family-School-Relationship. Parent-Participation. Parents. Young-Children.
DE Child-Development. Day-Care-Centers. Family-Day-Care. Parent-Attitudes. Socialization. Teacher-Attitudes.
ID IDENTIFIERS: Continuity. Day Care Selection. Parent Caregiver Relationship.
AB This report reviews the literature pertaining to parent and caregiver attitudes, values, and practices, and their effects on children. Topics include: (1) child care selection; (2) assessment of continuity between the home and day care; (3) communication between parents and caregivers; (4) variables which affect communication; (5) parent and caregiver attitudes; (6) parent and caregiver roles which are assigned by society; (7) parent and caregiver views on the role of day care; (8) parent participation in day care and obstacles to such participation. The report suggests that parents' participation in the activities of their children's day care facility, and communication between parents and caregivers, are minimal. Even though parents and caregivers have differing expectations for each other, they appear to be satisfied with their relationship. A list of 50 references concludes the report. (RJC).

AN ED300120.
AU Fredericks, Anthony D.; Brigham, Mary F.
TI Parent Letters for Early Learning. A Good Year Book.
PR EDRS Price - MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
AV Good Year Books, Department GYB, 1900 East Lake Avenue, Glenview, IL 60025 ($7.95).
NT 74p.
YR 89.
DE Learning-Activities. Letters-Correspondence. Parent-Education. Parenting-Skills.
DE Child-Caregivers. Child-Development. Day-Care-Centers. Parent-Child-Relationship. Parents. Preschool-Education. Resource-Materials.
ID IDENTIFIERS: Parent Caregiver Relationship. TARGET AUDIENCE: Teachers. Practitioners.
AB This book consists of 28 letters that child caregivers who work with children aged 3-6 can send to parents. Letters are organized into eight categories: (1) self-concept; (2) reading and writing readiness; (3) math readiness; (4) imaginative play; (5) motor development; (6) social development; (7) oral language and concept development; and (8) visual and auditory skills. For each of these categories, there are three to six perforated letters which can be removed, duplicated, and sent home to parents during the year. Each letter explains a child development concept and offers 5 to 10 activities for the child and parent to do together. The book provides special project ideas which are extensions of one or more ideas mentioned in the letters of each category. Finally, the book includes a certification of recognition for the child which is to be signed by both teacher and parent. (RJC).

AN ED298396.
AU Elings, Joette Renee.

TI The Effects of Parenting Styles on Children's Self-Esteem: A Developmental Perspective.
PR EDRS Price - MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
NT 47p. ; Doctoral Research Paper, Biola University.
YR 88.
DE Child-Rearing. Children. Individual-Needs. Parent-Child-Relationship. Self-Esteem.
DE Adolescents. Age-Differences. Developmental-Stages. Discipline. Parent-Influence. Parenting-Skills. Power-Structure.
ID IDENTIFIERS: Authoritarian Behavior. Authority.
AB The effects of parenting styles on children's self-esteem were examined by dividing the empirical literature into three age groups: the preschool child; the elementary child; and the adolescent. Major literature reviews by W. C. Becker, B. Martin, and E. E. Maccoby and J. A. Martin are discussed and inconsistencies among the reviews are examined. Methodological issues involved in doing research on parent-child variables and self-esteem are considered, including problems associated with subjects as informants, observational data, situations and themes, the issue of control, and research on self-esteem. Results of the literature review are presented which showed that: (1) in preschoolers, authoritative parenting was associated with girls' self-esteem, but fathers' authoritative parenting was associated with low self-esteem in preschool boys; (2) at the elementary age, both mothers' and fathers' permissiveness and mothers' authoritativeness were associated with boys' self-esteem; and (3) for adolescents, lack of rigid control, high support, and limit-setting accompanied by communication were positively associated with self-esteem. It is suggested that these tentative guidelines must be tempered by the fact that each child is different. Individual differences were not taken into account in the research, making it even more important for the parents to be aware of their child's individual needs and their responses to disciplinary styles. (Author/ABL).

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AN ED296800.
AU Wright, Ellen M.
TI Improving Parental Involvement in the Primary School through Increased Parental Awareness and Development of Parenting Skills.
PR EDRS Price - MF01/PC05 Plus Postage.
NT 109p. ; Ed. D. Practicum, Nova University.
YR 88.
DE Educational-Objectives. Parent-Education. Parenting-Skills. Parent-School-Relationship. School-Activities.
DE Parent-Participation. Parent-Workshops. Primary-Education. Publicity. Public-Relations. Seminars.
ID IDENTIFIERS: Parents As Teachers.
AB A learning disability teacher consultant to a school district implemented a practicum designed to counter a gradual decline in involvement of parents of children in kindergarten through third grade. Practicum goals were to: (1) increase parents' knowledge and understanding of school program goals and activities in order to maximize the effectiveness of interventions with the children; (2) encourage parental involvement in the ongoing activities of the primary school program; and (3) increase parenting skills and help parents become facilitators of their children's development. A needs assessment survey of teachers and parents was administered. A need for workshops, seminars, dissemination of information, newsletters, and parenting skills development was identified. Workshops and an Active Parenting seminar were planned and supervised. Radio and public television announcements, newspaper articles and advertisements, newsletters, and notices sent home with students were used to encourage parental involvement. Evaluation data indicated that the practicum was a positive experience for participating teachers and parents. Related materials including: introductory letters, the parent needs assessment, the staff survey, the state commissioner's letter, parent needs assessment results, staff survey results, parent involvement evaluation, the parent sign-in scheet, the newsletter information sheet and a memo to primary school teachers are appended. (RH).

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AN ED293622.
AU Haley, Paul; Berry, Karen.
TI Home and School as Partners: Helping Parents Help Their Children. A Resource Packet.
PR EDRS Price - MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
AV The Regional Laboratory for Educational Improvement of the Northeast & Islands, 290 South Main Street, Andover, MA 01810 ($2.25, plus $2.50 postage and handling).
NT 19p.
YR 88.
DE Parent-Participation. Parent-School-Relationship. Parent-Student-Relationship. Parent-Teacher-Cooperation.
DE Cultural-Differences. Home-Visits. Parent-Associations. Parent-Teacher-Conferences.
AB This resource packet presents some of the arguments for, and research about, parents playing an active role in the education of their children--not just by being supportive at home, but also by being involved in the school. The issues covered include: (1) the need for parent involvement; (2) goals of parent involvement; (3) types of parent involvement; (4) planning for parent involvement; (5) advantages of parent involvement; and (6) difficulties of parent involvement in culturally diverse schools. Brief descriptions of successful parent involvement programs in the Northeast are provided, as is a nationwide list of resource groups that support parent involvement in the schools. A 39-item bibliography is included. (PCB).

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AN ED292565.
AU Harmon, Geraldine.
TI Facilitating Communicative Competence in Young Children: Techniques for Parents & Teachers.
PR EDRS Price - MF01/PC07 Plus Postage.
NT 151p. ; Ed. D. Practicum, Nova University.
YR 88.
DE Communication-Skills. Competence. Elementary-School-Students. Inservice-Teacher-Education. Kindergarten-Children. Parent-Education.
DE Grade-1. Kindergarten. Primary-Education. Workshops.

ID TARGET AUDIENCE: Practitioners.
AB A practicum was implemented by a licensed speech-language pathologist working in a clinical and instructional program in a predominantly black, inner-city community in northeastern Indiana. The practicum was designed to improve the communicative competence of young children in a kindergarten-first grade setting. It was implemented because screening data, increased referrals for speech-language services, and direct observation of classroom procedure and technology indicated that a problem existed. Eight parent training workshops, four teacher training workshops, and one building level in-service session were conducted. Each workshop for parents addressed a communication topic, parental concerns, and communication facilitation techniques. Workshop sessions were supplemented with home training packets compiled to encourage parent follow-through. Each workshop for teachers highlighted one observation and diagnostic tool used to gather information on communication skills of young students. Teachers developed strategies for intervention. A teacher training booklet was compiled. Issues addressed in the in-service session included the effect of communicative competence on academic performance, the setting for a climate of change, promotional criteria, and intervention strategies. Evaluation findings indicated that teachers and parents demonstrated increased understanding of communication development and techniques to aid communicative competence in young children. Related materials are appended. (RH).

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AN ED286655.
AU Lerner, Jacqueline V.; And Others.
TI Maternal Employment, Maternal Role Satisfaction and Early Adolescent Outcomes.
PR EDRS Price - MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
NT 35p.; Paper presented at the Biennial Meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development (Baltimore, MD, April 23-26, 1987).
YR 87.
DE Academic-Achievement. Employed-Parents. Mothers. Parent-Influence.
DE Children. Elementary-Education. Intelligence-Quotient.
ID IDENTIFIERS: Role Satisfaction.
AB Examined were relations among maternal employment history, maternal role satisfaction, and early adolescent outcomes. It was hypothesized that variables related to mother's satisfaction would be more predictive of child's outcomes than the marker variable of employment status. Results indicated that early maternal employment status during the child's infancy and preschool years predicted achievement in grades 1 and 2, but maternal employment at any time during the child's life did not relate to achievement in early adolescence. The process marked by the maternal employment variable appeared to relate to amount of time spent out of the home. Mothers who worked more during these early years had children with lower grade point averages in the first two grades. As expected, satisfaction variables predicted more of the child achievement outcomes than employment history. Mothers who were less involved in household work and more involved in child care had children with higher IQ scores and self-rated scholastic competence in sixth grade. In addition, mothers who were satisfied with child care

arrangements had children with higher grade point averages and self-rated scholastic competence in grade 6. Finally, mothers' experience of low role difficulty was related to their report of fewer problem behaviors in their children. (Author/RH).

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AN ED286651.
AU Carlson, Betty Clark.
TI Steps to Independence: A Resource Guide for Parents of Young Children.
PR EDRS Price - MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
NT 59p.
YR 87.
DE Child-Rearing. Competence. Preschool-Children. Self-Care-Skills. Socialization.
DE Check-Lists. Guidelines. Learning-Activities. Parent-Materials. Preschool-Education. Resource-Materials.
ID IDENTIFIERS: Independence Training. TARGET AUDIENCE: Parents.
AB This PreSET curriculum activity resource guide for parents provides ideas and suggestions for developing independence and responsibility in preschool children. The 36 skills for children which are included in the guide were selected by parents of 5-year-olds in Hawaii as those skills which were important for their children. The skills are grouped into six categories: personal care, eating, leisure and recreation, communication, responsibility, and independence. After the brief introduction in Section I, Section II offers tips for parents involved in teaching their preschoolers. Section III lists the 36 skills. Section IV provides a skills checklist and a community areas checklist for identifying (1) skills the child has mastered and those yet to be acquired, and (2) areas in the community where parents would like to take their child. Section V, the most extensive section, suggests activities parents can use for developing preschoolers' skills. (RH).

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AN ED286616.
AU Cherry, Florence J.
TI Working with Single-Parent Families: A Manual for Conducting Workshops with Single Parents. A Facilitator's Guide.
PR EDRS Price - MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
AV Cornell University, Distribution Center, 7 Research Park, Ithaca, NY 14850 ($10.25; includes shipping and handling).
NT 293p.
YR 87.
DE Employed-Women. Family-Problems. One-Parent-Family. Problem-Solving. Workshops.
DE Curriculum-Guides. Instructional-Materials. Teaching-Guides.
ID IDENTIFIERS: Role Preparation. Social Roles.
AB Part I of this curriculum guide outlines six workshop sessions. The instructional materials included were designed to support single parents as they identify and confront problems with which they and their children must cope. Some of the topics addressed are the need to help single parents begin to think of and see themselves as individuals as well as parents; an exploration of the myths that society has developed about single parents and their children; and

the methods parents can use to deal with younger and older children in meaningful ways. Part II, which covers four sessions, focuses on the problems and issues that single parents must resolve when they decide to work outside the home. This part presents techniques for avoiding conflicts and for coping with the effects of out-of-home activity on child care and household management. In addition, the process of mentally and physically preparing for work is explored and advice is offered on aspects of the process such as assessing job skills by using a newspaper's classified section, and role-playing the job interview. Appended materials contain a detailed review of the basic training techniques facilitators use in presenting the workshops. Also included are profiles of older single parents and teenage parents and discussions of their needs and the needs of their children. (RH).

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AN ED286615.
AU Goldberg, Wendy A.; And Others.
TI Working Parents' Expectations and Perceptions of Their Young Children.
PR EDRS Price - MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
NT 13p. ; Revised version of paper presented at the Biennial Meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development (Baltimore, MD, April 23-26, 1987).
YR 87.
DE Employed-Parents. Expectation. Parent-Attitudes. Sex-Differences. Young-Children.
DE Fathers. Mothers. Role-Conflict.
ID IDENTIFIERS: Commitment. Parent Expectations. TARGET AUDIENCE: Researchers.
AB This study tests the hypothesis that men's and women's psychological commitment to parenting and work exerts an influence on their expectations for and perceptions of their children's behavior. Subjects were 104 fathers and 194 mothers, each with a preschool child, who were employed in a wide range of occupations. Data were collected by means of mailed questionnaires, which included new and existing measures of: (1) work and family life; (2) perceptions and expectations of children's behavior; (3) spousal support for work and family roles; and (4) role strain. Findings indicated that commitments to work and parenting were associated with fathers' expectations for and mothers' perceptions of children's behavior. Fathers' expectations for mature behavior were influenced by patterns of work and parenting commitments. Fathers with stronger work commitment expected more mature behavior. Mothers' perceptions of their preschoolers' behavior were most favorable when mothers held high commitments to both work and parenting. For fathers, low parenting commitment was associated with greater role strain. No significant associations between role strain and work and parenting commitments were found for mothers. For mothers and fathers, higher role strain was accompanied by less favorable perceptions of their preschool children. For both parents, greater spousal support was related to more favorable perceptions of children. (Author/RH).

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AN ED281665.
AU Bray, James H.; And Others.
TI Parenting Practices and Family Process During Early Remarriage.
PR EDRS Price - MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
NT 15p. ; Paper presented at the Biennial Meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development (Baltimore, MD, April 23-26, 1987).
YR 87.
DE Child-Rearing. Emotional-Adjustment. Family-Relationship. Parenting-Skills. Stepfamily. Young-Children.
DE Comparative-Analysis. Parent-Child-Relationship.
AB Presented are findings from a research project on marital and family processes and parenting practices during early remarriage and their relationships to children's behavioral adjustment. Participants were 31 stepfather families and 33 nondivorced families, all of which had a target child between 6 and 9 years of age. Stepfamilies had been married for a period ranging from 4 to 7 months. No differences between stepfamilies and nuclear families were found on self-report measures of marital adjustment. However, observations of marital interactions indicated that stepfamily couples were more negative and coercive and exhibited poorer communication skills than nondivorced couples. Overall, boys' and girls' behavioral problems in stepfamilies were associated with more negative family processes and less effective parenting practices. Results indicated that better marital adjustment is more likely to occur in stepfamilies with girls, but be more important for the behavioral adjustment of boys in stepfamilies. Thus, couples at this early stage could perhaps benefit from training to improve their marital skills. (Author/RH).

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AN EJ386002.
AU Silvern, Steven B.; Hopman, Wilma M.
TI Reviews of Research: Interactional Approaches to Parent Training.
SO Childhood Education; v65 n3 p167-71 Spr 1989. 89.
AV UMI.
YR 89.
DE Intervention.  Language-Skills.  Parent-Child-Relationship.
   Parent-Education.  Young-Children.
DE Communication-Skills.  Early-Childhood-Education.
   Literature-Reviews.  Program-Descriptions.  Program-Effectiveness.
ID IDENTIFIERS: Developmental Delays.  Interactional Approach.
AB Reviews four interactional parent training programs designed to
   improve language and communication skills of developmentally delayed
   children through parent-child interaction.  Programs include the
   Ecological Communication Organization, Developmental Language
   Program, Putting Two Words Together, and Hensen Early Language Parent
   Program.  (BB).

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AN EJ385463.
AU Carpenter, Catherine L.
TI The Search Process: Choosing an Early Intervention Program.
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SO Exceptional Parent; v19 n1 p30-37 Jan-Feb 1989. 89.
AV UMI.
YR 89.
DE Decision-Making.  Disabilities.  Parent-Role.  Program-Evaluation.
   School-Choice.  Student-Placement.
DE Check-Lists.  Intervention.  Preschool-Education.
ID IDENTIFIERS: Early Intervention.   TARGET AUDIENCE: Parents.
AB A planned search/selection process can help locate the best possible
   learning situation for a child needing early intervention services.
   Parents are offered a detailed checklist for evaluating programs, and
   are encouraged to consider goals for the coming years, to make site
   visits to potential programs, and to ask questions.  (JDD).

******************************************************************************

AN EJ382696.
AU Pratt, Michael W.; And Others.
TI Mothers and Fathers Teaching 3-Year-Olds: Authoritative Parenting and
   Adult Scaffolding of Young Children's Learning.
SO Developmental Psychology; v24 n6 p832-39 Nov 1988. 88.
AV UMI.
YR 88.
DE Learning.  Parent-Influence.  Teaching-Styles.  Young-Children.
DE Performance-Factors.  Tutoring.
ID IDENTIFIERS: Parenting Style.  Parents as Teachers.  Scaffolding.
AB Data from 24 mothers and fathers who worked separately with their
   3-year-old children on difficult block construction, matrix
   classification, and story retelling tasks were consistent with the
   hypothesis that authoritative parents may obtain some of their
   reported success in cognitive skill socialization by using a tutoring
   style that is more effective than that used by other parents.  (RH).

******************************************************************************

AN EJ382672.
AU Roopnarine, Jaipaul L.; Hempel, Lynn M.
TI Day Care and Family Dynamics.
SO Early Childhood Research Quarterly; v3 n4 p427-38 Dec 1988. 88.
YR 88.
DE Child-Development.  Day-Care.  Dual-Career-Family.
   Family-Relationship.  Parent-Attitudes.  Parent-Child-Relationship.
DE Infants.  Job-Satisfaction.  Marital-Satisfaction.
   Preschool-Children.  Questionnaires.  Social-Support-Groups.
ID IDENTIFIERS: Day Care Effects.
AB Presents results of a survey of 50 dual-earner families whose
   preschool-aged children entered day care either before six months of
   age or during the second year of life.  Parents reported on their
   perceptions of day care environment and effects, and on various
   factors related to personal and job satisfaction.  (NH).

******************************************************************************

AN EJ382667.
AU Field, Tiffany; And Others.
TI Infant Day Care Facilitates Preschool Social Behavior.
SO Early Childhood Research Quarterly; v3 n4 p341-59 Dec 1988. 88.
YR 88.
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DE Attachment-Behavior. Day-Care-Centers. Infants. Preschool-Children. Social-Behavior.
DE Early-Childhood-Education. Interaction-Process-Analysis. Mothers. Peer-Relationship. Play. Prosocial-Behavior.
ID IDENTIFIERS: Day Care Effects.
AB Compared play, social, and attachment behaviors of 71 preschool children who had entered infant day care at varying ages and received varying amounts of day care. Concluded that continuous infant day care in quality centers appears to facilitate preschool social behavior and does not negatively affect attachment behavior. (NH).

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AN EJ382659.
AU Morgan, Elizabeth L.
TI Talking with Parents when Concerns Come Up.
SO Young Children; v44 n2 p52-56 Jan 1989. 89.
AV UMI.
YR 89.
DE Parent-Teacher-Conferences. Parent-Teacher-Cooperation. Problem-Solving. Young-Children.
DE Early-Childhood-Education. Parent-Counseling. Teacher-Effectiveness. Teaching-Styles.
ID IDENTIFIERS: Child Behavior.
AB Suggests approaches for teachers to use during parent-teacher discussions that occur as a result of parents' or teachers' concern about young children's behavior. Provides a list of nine readings for further information. (RJC).

****

AN EJ381202.
AU Gilbert, Neil.
TI Teaching Children to Prevent Sexual Abuse.
SO Public Interest; n93 p3-15 Fall 1988. 88.
AV UMI.
YR 88.
DE Child-Abuse. Preschool-Children. Preschool-Curriculum. Prevention. Sexual-Abuse.
DE Curriculum-Evaluation. Outcomes-of-Education. Preschool-Education. Program-Effectiveness. Rape. Sexual-Harassment. Sexuality. Young-Children.
AB Criticizes sexual abuse prevention training for preschool children, and analyzes the content of five curricula currently in use in California, North Dakota, and Washington. Recommends greater vigilance by adult caretakers and less reliance on children to identify molestation. (FMW).

****

AN EJ380597.
AU Bus, Adriana G.; van IJzendoorn, Marinus H.
TI Mother-Child Interactions, Attachment, and Emergent Literacy: A Cross-sectional Study.
SO Child Development; v59 n5 p1262-72 Oct 1988. 88.
AV UMI.
YR 88.

DE Attachment-Behavior. Mothers. Parent-Child-Relationship. Prereading-Experience. Young-Children.
DE Cross-Sectional-Studies. Reading-Instruction.
ID IDENTIFIERS: Ainsworth Strange Situation Procedure. Emergent Literacy.
AB Studied interactions which are related to written language, attachment security, and emergent literacy between 45 mothers and their children, aged one-and-a-half to five-and-a-half years. Results suggest that mothers give reading instruction to small children by naming letters and well-known words which contain those letters. Mother-child interaction is related to attachment security and emergent literacy. (RJC).

****

AN EJ367902.
AU Grossman, Frances K.; And Others.
TI Fathers and Children: Predicting the Quality and Quantity of Fathering.
SO Developmental Psychology; v24 n1 p82-91 Jan 1988. 88.
AV UMI.
YR 88.
DE Child-Rearing. Fathers. Interpersonal-Relationship. Parent-Child-Relationship. Psychological-Characteristics.
DE Employed-Parents. Family-Characteristics. Mothers. Young-Children.
ID TARGET AUDIENCE: Researchers.
AB Looked at the quality and quantity of interactions between fathers and their firstborn five-year-olds. Goals were to identify predictors of men's parenting from their own adaptation (direct effects) and from their wives' characteristics (indirect effects). (PCB).

****

AN EJ379162.
AU Swick, Kevin J.
TI Parental Efficacy and Involvement: Influences on Children.
SO Childhood Education; v65 n1 p37-38,40,42 Fall 1988. 88.
AV UMI.
YR 88.
DE Child-Development. Parent-Influence. Parent-Participation. Professional-Services. Research-Needs.
DE Early-Childhood-Education. Family-Programs. Literature-Reviews. Parent-Child-Relationship. Parent-Education.
ID IDENTIFIERS: Child Behavior. Parental Efficacy. Professional Role.
AB Reviews findings of studies that address the dynamics among parental efficacy, parental involvement, and children's functioning; suggests their possible applications to early childhood education; and explores viable options for broadening research and study. (BB).

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AN EJ379154.
AU O'Brien, Shirley J.
TI For Parents Particularly: Early Learning Guidelines.

SO Childhood Education; v65 n1 p33-34 Fall 1988. 88.
AV UMI.
YR 88.
DE Early-Experience. Learning-Experience. Learning-Readiness. Observation. Parent-Influence. Young-Children.
DE Early-Childhood-Education. Educational-Opportunities. Guidelines. Parent-Child-Relationship. Parent-Materials.
AB Addresses the pressures of early academic learning among young children and presents parents with three guidelines for pursuing early learning experiences: readiness, observation, and options. (BB).

****

AN EJ379153.
AU Kostelnik, Marjorie J.; And Others.
TI Children's Self-Esteem: The Verbal Environment.
SO Childhood Education; v65 n1 p29-32 Fall 1988. 88.
AV UMI.
YR 88.
DE Classroom-Environment. Self-Esteem. Teacher-Role. Verbal-Communication. Young-Children.
DE Classroom-Communication. Early-Childhood-Education. Teacher-Student-Relationship. Teaching-Guides.
ID IDENTIFIERS: Adult Child Relationship. Caregiver Role.
AB Maintains that the manner in which adult participants in early childhood programs create the verbal environment in the classroom dictates children's estimation of self-worth. Presents the characteristics of negative and positive verbal environments, the importance of a positive verbal environment, and steps for establishing a positive verbal environment. (BB).

****

AN EJ379145.
AU Ispa, Jean M.; And Others.
TI Parents, Teachers and Day Care Children: Patterns of Interconnection.
SO Journal of Research in Childhood Education; v3 n1 p76-84 Spr-Sum 1988. 88.
YR 88.
DE Day-Care-Centers. Interpersonal-Relationship. Parents. Preschool-Children. Preschool-Teachers. Social-Behavior.
DE Child-Rearing. Early-Childhood-Education. Parent-Child-Relationship. Parent-School-Relationship. Systems-Analysis. Teacher-Student-Relationship.
AB Studied the interactions between four key individuals in the child care system: the father, mother, day care center teacher, and child. Naturalistic observations of 18 three-year-old children and their caretakers were conducted in homes or day care centers. Findings offered evidence of behavioral interconnectedness within all but the teacher-father dyad. (RJC).

****

AN EJ372807.
AU Cecil, Nancy Lee.

TI Help Children Become More Critical TV-Watchers.
SO PTA Today; v13 n6 p12-14 Apr 1988. 88.
AV UMI.
YR 88.
DE Children. Parent-Role. Reading-Habits. Television-Commercials. Television-Viewing.
DE Vocabulary-Development.
ID IDENTIFIERS: Critical Viewing. TARGET AUDIENCE: Parents.
AB Watching television is not necessarily a bad habit, and when parents monitor their children's viewing habits, it can prove educational. Ways parents might teach their children to view television programs and commercials critically are suggested. (JL).

****

AN EJ368450.
AU Conroy, Elizabeth H.
TI Primary Prevention for Gifted Students: A Parent Education Group.
SO Elementary School Guidance and Counseling; v22 n2 p110-16 Dec 1987. 87.
AV UMI.
YR 87.
DE Adjustment-to-Environment. Children. Gifted. Parent-Education. Parenting-Skills. Parents.
DE Parent-Child-Relationship. Parent-Role.
AB Describes parent education group for parents of gifted children whose purpose was to help parents develop a better understanding of their children and to increase their comfort in raising their gifted children. Claims that after participation parents (N=23) demonstrated understanding of gifted children's needs. (ABL).

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AN EJ367916.
AU Galinsky, Ellen.
TI Parents and Teacher-Caregivers: Sources of Tension, Sources of Support.
SO Young Children; v43 n3 p4-12 Mar 1988. 88.
AV UMI.
YR 88.
DE Child-Caregivers. Day-Care. Employed-Parents. Helping-Relationship. Preschool-Teachers. Teacher-Effectiveness.
DE Early-Childhood-Education. Parent-Teacher-Cooperation.
ID IDENTIFIERS: Tension.
AB Outlines and discusses some of the major sources of tension between employed parents and teacher-caregivers. Also provides ways in which teacher-caregivers can work effectively with parents and turn these sources of tension into sources of support. (BB).

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ERIC is a nationwide information system funded by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement. ERIC makes information on all aspects of education readily available. ERIC covers such subjects as child development, classroom techniques, reading, science, social studies, mathematics, career education, counseling, adult education, rural and urban education, teacher education, educational administration, special education, testing, and higher education.

Who can use ERIC?

You can--whether you are a teacher, researcher, librarian, student, legislator, parent, or anyone else who is interested in information related to education.

Where is ERIC?

More than 700 libraries and other institutions in the U.S. and other countries have the ERIC document collection on microfiche. Write to ERIC/EECE* for a list of the ERIC collections in your state. Many more institutions subscribe to the printed indexes for the ERIC collection.

What is in ERIC?

When you use ERIC, you can find citations to:

ERIC Documents - primarily unpublished or "fugitive" materials, including more than 220,000 research studies, program descriptions and evaluations, conference proceedings, curriculum materials, bibliographies, and other documents.

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How do I use ERIC to find citations?

ERIC Documents - Use ERIC's monthly abstract journal *Resources in Education* (*RIE*). *RIE* includes subject, author, and institution indexes and gives you an abstract of each cited document.

ERIC Journals - Use ERIC's other monthly publication *Current Index to Journals in Education* (*CIJE*). *CIJE* lists about 1800 new journal citations each month and includes a short annotation for most articles cited.

Prepared by the ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education (ERIC/EECE). *ERIC/EECE address and phone number are on the back of this page.

What if I want to read a document or journal article cited in RIE or CIJE?

ERIC Documents -	The complete text of most ERIC documents is available on "microfiche" (a 4 x 6 inch card of microfilm) which must be read on a microfiche reader. Libraries and other institutions which have the ERIC collection have microfiche readers. Many institutions also have microfiche reader-printers that can make paper copies from the microfiche.
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How can ERIC materials be ordered?

ERIC Documents -	Most ERIC documents can be ordered from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS) in Alexandria, Virginia. You can write ERIC/EECE for an order form or use the one in each *RIE* issue.
ERIC Journals -	About 75% of the journal articles cited in *CIJE* can be ordered from University Microfilms in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Write ERIC/EECE for an order form or use the order information in *CIJE*.

How can I search ERIC by computer?

One of the most efficient ways to use ERIC is to order a computer search of the ERIC data base on a particular topic. There are computer search services in many libraries and other institutions as well as at most ERIC Clearinghouses. To get a computer search, describe your topic to the person who will do the search; the search will then be designed and run through a computer. You will receive a printout with citations from *RIE* and from *CIJE*: a fee is usually charged for computer searches. Write any ERIC Clearinghouse for more information on search services in your state.

How does information get into ERIC?

Sixteen ERIC Clearinghouses, in various locations across the U.S., collect and process ERIC documents for *RIE* and prepare citations for *CIJE*. Each Clearinghouse is responsible for a different subject area, such as elementary and early childhood education or teacher education.

Do the Clearinghouses offer any other services?

The ERIC Clearinghouses offer various services including answering questions, searching ERIC by computer, and distributing mini-bibliographies, newsletters, and other publications. Check with individual Clearinghouses for details.

How do I find out more about ERIC?

Contact the ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education or any other ERIC Clearinghouse. We will be happy to send you additional information on ERIC, *RIE*, *CIJE*, other ERIC Clearinghouses, computer searches, or document ordering. We can also send you a list of ERIC collections and institutions offering computer searches of ERIC in your geographical area.

ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education
College of Education
University of Illinois
805 W. Pennsylvania Ave.
Urbana, IL 61801 (217) 333-1386

ERIC Network Components

There are currently sixteen (16) ERIC Clearinghouses, each responsible for a major area of the field of education. Clearinghouses acquire, select, catalog, abstract, and index the documents announced in *Resources in Education (RIE)*. They also prepare interpretive summaries and annotated bibliographies dealing with high interest topics and based on the documents analyzed for *RIE;* these information analysis products are also announced in *Resources in Education*.

ERIC Clearinghouses:

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Columbus, Ohio 43210-1090
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COUNSELING AND PERSONNEL SERVICES (CG)
University of Michigan
School of Education, Room 2108
610 East University Street
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109-1259
Telephone: (313) 764-9492

EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT (EA)
University of Oregon
1787 Agate Street
Eugene, Oregon 97403-5207
Telephone: (503) 686-5043

ELEMENTARY AND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION (PS)
University of Illinois
College of Education
805 West Pennsylvania Avenue
Urbana, Illinois 61801-4897
Telephone: (217) 333-1386

HANDICAPPED AND GIFTED CHILDREN (EC)
Council for Exceptional Children
1920 Association Drive
Reston, Virginia 22091-1589
Telephone: (703) 620-3660

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One Dupont Circle, N.W., Suite 630
Washington, D.C. 20036-1183
Telephone: (202) 296-2597

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Huntington Hall, Room 030
Syracuse, New York 13244-2340
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Mathematical Sciences Building, Room 8118
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Los Angeles, California 90024-1564
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Bloomington, Indiana 47408-2373
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2440 Research Boulevard, Suite 550
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